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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO PURITANISM

'Puritan' was originally a term of contempt, and 'Puritanism' has often been stereotyped by critics and admirers alike. As a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism, it was a product of acute tensions within the post-Reformation Church of England. But it was never monolithic or purely oppositional, and its impact reverberated far beyond seventeenth-century England and New England. This *Companion* broadens our understanding of Puritanism, showing how students and scholars might engage with it from new angles and uncover the surprising diversity that fermented beneath its surface. The book explores issues of gender, literature, politics and popular culture in addition to addressing the Puritans' core concerns such as theology and devotional praxis. Coverage extends to Irish, Welsh, Scottish and European versions of Puritanism as well as to English and American practice. It challenges readers to re-evaluate this crucial tradition within its wider social, cultural, political and religious contexts.

John Coffey is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Leicester. His publications include *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (2006) and *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (1997, 2002).

Paul C.H. Lim is Assistant Professor of Reformation History at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. He is author of *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in its Seventeenth-Century Context* (2004).

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
PURITANISM

Edited by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521678001

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First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

The Cambridge companion to Puritanism / [edited by] John Coffey, Paul C.H. Lim.

p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to religion)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-86088-8 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-67800-1 (pbk.)

I. Puritans. I. Coffey, John, 1969– II. Lim, Paul Chang-Ha. III. Title.

BX9323.C36 2008

285'.9–dc22

2008015706

ISBN 978-0-521-86088-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-67800-1 paperback

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Contributors

Francis J. Bremer is Professor of History at Millersville University and Editor of the Winthrop Papers for the Massachusetts Historical Society. He is the author of *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610–1992* (1994), *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (revised edition, 1995), *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (2003) and *Puritans: An Early Attempt to Build the Kingdom of God in America* (2008). He has edited (with Tom Webster) *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia* (2 vols., 2006).

John Coffey is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Leicester. He is the author of *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (1997), *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (2000) and *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (2006).

Patrick Collinson is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and was formerly Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge. His books include *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), *The Religion of Protestants* (1982), *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (1988), *The Reformation* (2003) and *From Cranmer to Sancho* (2006).

David R. Como is Associate Professor of History at Stanford University and author of *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (2004).

John Craig is Professor of History at Simon Fraser University. He is the author of *Reformation, Politics and Polemics: The Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500–1610* (2001). He has co-edited with Patrick Collinson and Brett Usher *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church: Dedham and Bury St Edmunds, 1582–1590* (2003).

Crawford Gribben is Long Room Hub Senior Lecturer in Early Modern Print Culture at Trinity College, Dublin. He is the author of *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550–1682* (2000) and *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (2007).

David D. Hall is Professor of American Religious History at Harvard Divinity School. His books include *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New*

England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century (1972), *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (1989) and *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology* (2004).

Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe is Professor of Christian History at Northern Seminary, Lombard, Illinois, and the author of *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (1982), and the editor of *Early New England Meditative Poetry: Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor* (1989).

Ann Hughes is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Keele. She is the author of *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620–1660* (1987), *The Causes of the English Civil War* (second edition, 1998) and ‘Gangraena’ and the Struggle for the English Revolution (2004).

Jeffrey K. Jue is Associate Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and the author of *Heaven upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586–1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (2006).

N. H. Keeble is Professor of English Studies at the University of Stirling. He is the author of *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (1982), *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (1987) and *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (2002). He has compiled (with Geoffrey Nuttall) a two-volume *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (1991), and edited *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (2001).

Peter Lake is Professor of History at Princeton University and author of *Moderate Puritans in the Elizabethan Church* (1982) and *Anglicans and Puritans?* (1988). His most recent books are *The Boxmaker’s Revenge: ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘Heterodoxy’ and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (2001) and *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (2002).

Paul C. H. Lim is Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in its Seventeenth-Century Context* (2004). He is currently working on a book entitled *Believing is Seeing: Reason and Revelation in the Anti-Trinitarian Debates in Seventeenth-Century England*.

Anthony Milton is Professor of Early Modern British History at the University of Sheffield and the author of *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (1995) and *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: The Career and Writings of Peter Heylyn* (2007). He is the editor of *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–19)* (2005).

John Morrill is Professor of British and Irish History at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Revolt in the Provinces* (second edition, 1998) and *The Nature of the English Revolution* (1993). He has written many articles

on seventeenth-century politics and religion, and edited a number of books including *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (1990) and *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart England* (1996).

John Spurr is Professor of History at the University of Swansea and author of *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (1991), *English Puritanism, 1603–1689* (1998), *England in the 1670s* (2000) and *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Society, Politics and Britain, 1603–1714* (2006). He has edited *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691. Volume II, The Reign of Charles II, 1677–1685* (2007).

Margo Todd is Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (1987) and *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (2002). She is the editor of *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (1995).

Dewey D. Wallace, Jr is Professor of Religion at the George Washington University and author of *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (1982). He is also the editor of *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans: An Anthology* (1987).

Alexandra Walsham is Professor of Reformation History at the University of Exeter. She has written many articles on early modern religion, and is the author of *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (1993), *Providence in Early Modern England* (1999) and *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (2006).

Tom Webster is Lecturer in Early Modern British History at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (1997). He has edited (with Kenneth Shipps) *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–38* (2004) and (with Francis Bremer) *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia* (2006).

Introduction

JOHN COFFEY AND PAUL C. H. LIM

LOCATING PURITANISM

In 1564, or thereabouts, the English discovered a new term of abuse – ‘Puritan’. Initially, it was an insult launched at nonconformist clergy within the newly reformed Elizabethan church, zealous Protestants who refused to wear prescribed liturgical vestments, particularly the white surplice, and who gained a reputation as ‘opposers of the hierarchy and church-service’. But soon the nickname was taken up by ‘profane mouths’, who deployed it rather indiscriminately ‘to abuse pious people’.¹ ‘Puritan’ became a handy smear word for bishops angered by clerical nonconformity, metropolitan playwrights provoked by censorious moralism, and villagers driven to distraction by assaults on traditional festive culture. By the early seventeenth century, Patrick Collinson explains, ‘Puritanism’ had become ‘the brand name for a certain kind of Protestant religiosity, social conduct and politics’.²

The polemical origins of the term have troubled historians, and led some to call for the abolition of Puritanism as a historical category. Yet for most scholars of early modern England and New England, the concept has proved indispensable. As the American historian Michael Winship explains, Puritanism is ‘an extremely convenient shorthand term’, but one that ‘is unavoidably a contextual, imprecise term, not an objective one, a term to use carefully but not take too seriously in itself’.³

Defining Puritanism has become a favourite parlour game for early modern historians. Some readers will be familiar with the discussion, but others may appreciate some basic orientation. The chapters in this collection offer different perspectives and approaches to the problem of definition, and together they build up a multifaceted picture of our subject. But we can begin by locating Puritans on the map of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European Christianity. Puritanism is the name we give to a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the unique context of

the Church of England but spilled out beyond it, branching off into divergent dissenting streams, and overflowing into other lands and foreign churches.

That statement needs unpacking, and we can start with the most basic point. Firstly, Puritanism was a variety of Protestantism, and Puritans were heirs of the Reformation inaugurated by Martin Luther's seminal re-reading of Christianity's foundational texts. Puritans affirmed the great slogans of Luther's Reformation – *sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura*; faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone – though there was disagreement over exactly what these slogans entailed. Like Luther, they were intensely preoccupied with personal salvation, and convinced that God pardoned sinners in response to simple faith in Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the Cross. Following the Reformer, they repudiated the penitential system of Roman Catholicism – the mass, confession, absolution, penance, indulgences, pilgrimage, prayer to the saints, prayer for the dead, and purgatory. Indeed, most Puritans shared Luther's conviction that the Papacy was the Antichrist predicted in the Book of Revelation, though in the course of the seventeenth century the notion of the Antichrist acquired far wider applications.⁴ Anti-popery was a staple of post-Reformation Protestantism, and Puritan anti-popery was particularly intense.⁵ In rejecting papal authority, Puritans affirmed Luther's teaching that the Bible was the Christian's only infallible authority. Puritan religion was religion of the Word, and the preaching and reading of the Bible were central to their faith.⁶ John Bunyan's fictional pilgrim, depicted so vividly by William Blake in the illustration on our cover, was a man fleeing the wrath of God and the City of Destruction, weighed down by the burden of sin and guilt, engrossed in the Bible, and asking the question: 'What must I do to be saved?'

Secondly, Puritanism was a variety of Reformed Protestantism, aligned with the continental Calvinist churches rather than with the Lutherans.⁷ Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger and other Reformed divines had promoted a second (more radical) wave of the Reformation, one which broke upon English shores from the 1540s onwards, and came to define English Protestantism.⁸ With the Reformed, Puritans believed that the Lutheran church remained too 'popish' in its liturgy, its sacramental theology and its church government. As Reformed Protestants, they favoured simplicity in worship, and recoiled with iconophobic horror from images and elaborate rituals.⁹ What Puritans sought was a thorough-going Reformation, though exactly how far that Reformation needed to go became a matter of bitter controversy. They often displayed a characteristically Reformed concern for divinely ordained forms of

church government and discipline, though they rarely had the chance to implement their ideas, and there was an antiformalist counter-current within English Puritanism.¹⁰ Like Calvin and other Reformed theologians, Puritans laid much stress on the doctrine of unconditional predestination, and in the seventeenth century they became embroiled in intra-Reformed controversies over election, free will, and the scope of Christ's atonement.¹¹ And like the Reformed, they typically qualified Luther's antithesis between law and gospel, emphasising the role of God's law within the Christian life and the local community, and trying (sometimes with conspicuous success) to recreate godly Genevas in England and America. This legalism provoked an 'antinomian backlash' from within, but even when radical Puritans rejected orthodox Reformed ideas about the moral law or predestination or infant baptism, they still defined themselves in relation to the Reformed tradition.¹²

Thirdly, however, Puritanism was a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the Church of England, and was a product of that unique environment and its tensions. Under Elizabeth I, the Church of England was widely regarded as a Reformed church, but it was anomalous in retaining certain features of late medieval Catholicism, including cathedrals (and their choirs), a formal liturgy, traditional clerical vestments and an elaborate hierarchy headed by bishops and archbishops. For Puritans, this Protestant church still contained too much of the old popery. Complaining that it was but 'halfly reformed', many lobbied for 'further reformation', aiming to bring the Church of England into closer alignment with other Reformed churches. This campaign enjoyed limited success, and by the 1590s Puritan reformers seemed to have been defeated.¹³ But the tensions generated by the Elizabethan Puritan movement helped to forge the language of 'Puritanism' and to consolidate godly identity. As Collinson has repeatedly emphasised, Puritanism 'was not a thing identifiable in itself, but one half of a stressful relationship'. The 'ecclesiastical vitriol' heaped on zealous Protestants in the Elizabethan decades contributed to the 'invention' of Puritanism.¹⁴ Under attack, the self-styled godly rapidly evolved an embattled sense of identity. Their critics saw them as a readily identifiable group, and a threat to the status quo; equally, the godly themselves learned to recognise each other, and created their own networks.¹⁵

Ironically, attacks on the godly intensified in the 1590s just as many leading Puritans were coming to terms with the episcopal Church of England and increasing their influence within it. The bleak prospects for wholesale ecclesiastical reformation forced English Puritans to invest

their energies elsewhere – in the development of a new style of Reformed devotion.¹⁶ Despite sharing much common ground with other Protestants, the godly cut a distinctive profile, both within the Church of England and across Reformed Europe, where they gained a reputation for their affective piety and practical divinity. English Puritan divines like Richard Greenham, Richard Rogers, William Perkins and Richard Sibbes became renowned as ‘physicians of the soul’. They took the Reformed doctrine of election to heart, fostering an ‘experimental predestinarianism’ that encouraged the believer to seek assurance that they were chosen by God for salvation. In contrast to Calvin and many continental Reformed churches, these English Puritans insisted on a strict sabbatarianism, centred on sermon attendance at church followed by godly exercises in families. They prescribed a demanding regime of personal devotions, including godly reading, psalm-singing, prayer, fasting and spiritual meditation. They recommended practices of self-discipline, including keeping a spiritual diary and private covenanting. And in works of casuistry, they set out an immensely exacting moral code. It can be no coincidence that this ‘first Protestant pietism’ arose within a half-Reformed church that lacked the usual Calvinist mechanisms of church discipline and often failed to satisfy the Reformed appetite for pure worship. It was a religious style tailored to suit voluntary Christians, who frequently gathered outside the parish structures.¹⁷

The sheer intensity of this spiritual praxis set the godly apart. Collinson has famously (and loosely) defined Puritans as ‘the hotter sort of Protestants’ (a phrase borrowed from an Elizabethan source).¹⁸ Distinguished by the zeal and intensity of their evangelical Protestantism, they were different in degree rather than in kind from the conformist Calvinists who held the best bishoprics and deaneries in England until the ascendancy of Archbishop Laud in the 1630s. Puritans were ‘forward Protestants’, ‘super-Protestants’, ‘perfect Protestants’, ‘the militant tendency’ of English Protestantism.¹⁹

Under Elizabeth and James, this hot Protestantism flourished *within* the established church, and it is misleading to think of a Puritan opposition at loggerheads with an ‘Anglican’ establishment. As historians of the period regularly remind each other, ‘Anglicanism’ is an anachronistic nineteenth-century term, and its use tends to obscure the firmly Reformed character of the Church of England before the rise of the Laudians. Whilst radical Puritans attacked bishops, and sometimes separated altogether from the national church, moderate Puritans were active participants in the Protestant mainstream.²⁰ As Patrick Collinson

observes in chapter 1, 'increasingly so-called "Puritanism" represented not so much an insurgency against the Reformed Church of England as a vigorous and growing tendency within it'. Puritans had emerged as a subset of English Reformed Protestants, and Puritanism can be located as 'a set of positions' on the spectrum of the English Church, a spectrum that ranged from church papists and high churchmen, through conformist Calvinists, to moderate Puritans and radical Puritans.²¹

Fourthly, Puritanism ultimately proved to be a uniquely fissiparous variety of Reformed Protestantism – while it originated within the Church of England, it spilled out beyond it, branching off into divergent dissenting streams. Before 1660, the vast majority of the godly in England remained within the national church. Yet for a religion of discipline, Puritanism proved to be remarkably fluid. Under Elizabeth and James, a minority of Puritans severed their connections with the Church of England and defined themselves against it, forming separatist and Baptist congregations outside the parish system. The most famous separatists ('the Pilgrim Fathers') left Scrooby in Nottinghamshire for Leiden in the Netherlands, before sailing the Atlantic to found the Plymouth Colony in 1620. During the English Revolution of the 1640s, when Puritans spearheaded the parliamentary revolt under godly political leaders like the earl of Warwick, John Pym and Oliver Cromwell, their fragmentation only accelerated. The mainstream Puritans divided between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and many thousands left parish churches to join 'gathered' churches composed purely of the godly. Some went further, becoming Seekers, Quakers, Muggletonians or Ranters.²²

Historians still debate whether the sects should be deemed Puritan or not.²³ Whilst they emerged from a Puritan milieu, some at least left the mainstream godly community far behind. Others, however, maintained links with godly brethren within the parishes, and can be usefully described as radical Puritans. Calvinistic Baptists, for example, were widely recognised as orthodox and pious, and the Puritan national church of the Cromwellian era incorporated some Baptists alongside Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Quakers, by contrast, were usually considered beyond the pale, accused of downgrading the authority of the Bible, the preaching of the Word and the centrality of Christ's atonement. The so-called Ranters were universally excoriated. Yet even these radicals were driving certain Puritan ideas to extreme conclusions. The boundaries of the Puritan community were drawn in different ways by different people. Oliver Cromwell had a more capacious conception of godly fellowship than the Presbyterian

heresiographer Thomas Edwards, one that could (at times) embrace even the Quaker leader, George Fox. What is clear is that, by the 1650s, a substantial minority of those we can reasonably call Puritans met in gathered churches outside the parochial system of the national church. After the Restoration, the majority of Puritan clergy – mainly Presbyterians like the prolific divine Richard Baxter – were also excluded from the Church of England. But they left with great reluctance, forced out by returning incumbents or parliamentary legislation. Many continued to attend parish services, and longed for the day when they could be comprehended within the established church.²⁴ Their persistent attachment to the Church of England reminds us that throughout the seventeenth century, most Puritans were not sectarians.

Finally, Puritanism spilled out beyond the boundaries of England, overflowing into other lands and foreign churches. Surging into Ireland, Wales and North America, it met with mixed success. In Ireland and Wales, Puritans were a tiny minority who made few inroads into the majority populations (though in Wales they did lay the groundwork for later Dissent).²⁵ In the Caribbean, ambitious Puritan colonisation projects failed, and in Virginia Puritans were thin on the ground.²⁶ In New England, by contrast, the godly would rule the roost, with the Puritan colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven and (especially) Rhode Island reflecting significant variations within Puritanism.²⁷ Aspects of English Puritanism were also exported to other Reformed churches. In Scotland, godly people were avid consumers of English Puritan practical divinity, and charges of ‘Puritanism’ abounded from the 1590s onwards, as James VI and then Charles I tried to bring the Church of Scotland more into line with its southern sister.²⁸ In the Netherlands, there was great demand for translations of devotional works by Puritan divines, and leading Dutch divines advocated Puritan innovations, such as strict sabbatarianism, conventicles and an introspective quest for assurance of election. In Hungary and Transylvania, some Reformed ministers were accused of being Puritans because they had promoted English practical divinity and the reform of church services. Other parts of the Reformed world were less receptive to English Puritan influence, a fact that highlights the distinctiveness of Puritanism within the broader Reformed tradition.²⁹ But if Puritanism was formed within the Church of England, it was not contained within it. It was a style of Reformed Protestantism that travelled far.

It also lasted long. Conventionally, historians date the end of Puritanism to the late seventeenth century (in England) or the 1730s (in North America) – and this volume happily accepts these conventions.

But Puritanism had an enduring legacy, one that fed into Protestant Dissent and Evangelicalism. In fact, many have argued that it left a lasting impression on the culture of the English-speaking world.³⁰

INTERPRETING PURITANISM

The dynamism and impact of Puritanism helps to explain why it has attracted so much attention from historians. The secondary literature on the subject is now so vast that compiling a comprehensive bibliography of modern scholarship is an almost impossible task. The 'Further Reading' at the end of each chapter in this *Companion* is just for starters. Puritanism has attracted attention for very different reasons. Various kinds of scholar have approached the subject from different locations and disciplines and with divergent questions and purposes.

For historians of Tudor and Stuart England – from S. R. Gardiner and Christopher Hill to Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake – understanding Puritanism has been part of a larger project of understanding the politics, religion and culture of early modern England. Most of these historians have worked within British (or American) universities. Puritanism has mattered to them because it helps to clarify the dynamics of church and state in the Elizabethan and early Stuart era, the upheavals of the English Revolution and the divisions of the Restoration. Indeed, it is generally accepted that one cannot explain the origins of the English Civil War without substantial reference to the godly. And in recent years, social and cultural historians have joined political historians in making major contributions to the field.³¹ As Peter Lake observes in his chapter, 'To review the historiography of Puritanism is to review the history of early modern England.'³²

Historians of colonial America have contributed as much to the study of Puritanism as their English counterparts. Indeed, the Puritan colonies of seventeenth-century New England have perhaps been studied more intensively than any comparable settlements in human history. As a consequence, we possess an enormously rich body of scholarship that illuminates every aspect of life in the seventeenth-century Bible commonwealths.³³ To some extent, this is because of the region's major educational establishments headed by Harvard and Yale, which trace their origins back to the Puritan era. Leading historians of New England Puritanism, like Samuel Eliot Morison, Perry Miller and Edmund Morgan, were ensconced in New England's great universities. Yet the New England Puritans also mattered because they were widely regarded as 'founders' or 'shapers' of American culture. Perry Miller (himself a

convinced atheist) turned to the study of Puritanism to fulfil 'the mission of expounding what I took to be the innermost propulsion of the United States'.³⁴ Many others have followed in his footsteps, believing that Puritan New England held the key to American identity.

For some social theorists, Puritanism had an even wider significance, for it could help to explain the emergence of modernity itself. The seminal work in this tradition was Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–5), which gave pride of place to the Puritans. Weber argued that Puritan anxiety over predestination produced ascetic habits of hard work and self-discipline – a 'Protestant ethic' which inadvertently fostered 'the spirit of capitalism'. His argument met with a mixed reception among historians, but inspired many imitators. During the course of the twentieth century, Puritanism was invoked to explain everything from England's scientific revolution to the rise of democracy. And while the impetus to connect Puritanism and modernity has been running out of steam, grand theorists have forced historians to think more deeply about the cultural impact of religion.³⁵

Modernity theorists tended to work in departments of social science, but another significant group of scholars was located in departments of English and American literature. Two Puritan writers have long held a place within the canon of English literature: John Milton and John Bunyan. Miltonists from William Haller to Sharon Achinstein have made important contributions to the study of Puritanism and the Puritan Revolution. Beginning with Milton and Bunyan, literary scholars have branched out to consider a much wider range of texts. The manuscript writings of New England poets like Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor have been recovered, and are now well established as major works of colonial American literature. And in recent years there has been a rediscovery of the writings of radical Puritans and of Puritan women like Lucy Hutchinson and Mary Rowlandson.³⁶

Finally, much important scholarship on Puritanism has been produced by confessional scholars. Many seminary or church historians have worked within what North Americans would call 'mainline' denominations. While they did not share the Calvinist theology of their subjects, they looked back to Puritans as progenitors of their own ecclesiastical traditions, and sought to write for the church as well as the academy. The most distinguished historian of this kind is the Congregationalist Geoffrey Nuttall, whose many articles and books remain essential guides to Puritanism.³⁷ Other confessional scholars have identified far more closely with the Calvinist orthodoxy of the

mainstream Puritans. Conservative Reformed authors (mainly pastors and theologians) often write semi-popular books for religious publishers, designed to edify a Christian audience, and sometimes tending towards hagiography. But Reformed scholars have also published substantial studies of Puritan thought.³⁸ The grand old man of this school, J.I. Packer, wrote an Oxford D. Phil. thesis on the theology of Richard Baxter in the 1950s (supervised by Geoffrey Nuttall) that still stands as one of the finest works on a Puritan theologian.³⁹

Puritanism, then, has attracted a wide variety of scholars who together have made this a particularly busy field of historical enquiry. Iconic Puritan figures – Milton, Cromwell, Bunyan, Baxter, Williams – are the subjects of a steady stream of books (in Milton's case, a veritable torrent).⁴⁰ And if studies published since 2001 are any indication, Puritanism continues to inspire groundbreaking work. Exciting new research has lifted the lid on acute tensions within early Stuart Puritanism, tracing the emergence of antinomianism in England and New England, and shedding new light on the fracturing of the godly community.⁴¹ Another important breakthrough has been the transcription of the entire minutes of the Westminster Assembly, the great synod of Puritan divines called by the Long Parliament in the 1640s to reform the national church. Chad van Dixhoorn and his team are currently preparing a critical edition of these minutes, and their labours will greatly enrich our understanding of English Puritanism in the mid-seventeenth century.⁴² Meanwhile, another group of historians led by Mark Goldie has transcribed and edited the 'Entring Book' of the Presbyterian Roger Morrice, a major document that transforms our view of later Stuart Puritanism.⁴³ Scholars of early modern witchcraft have explored Puritan demonology, and explained how in particular sets of circumstances godly paranoia stimulated witch trials, including the unique witch-hunts in East Anglia during the English Civil War and around Salem in 1692.⁴⁴ And there has been fascinating work on Puritans and Native Americans in New England, including monographs on the Puritan missionary John Eliot, the Praying Indians of Martha's Vineyard, and the tragedy of King Philip's War.⁴⁵ As this work amply demonstrates, the study of Puritanism is still flourishing.

SURVEYING PURITANISM

This *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* is not exhaustive, but it is designed to offer a rounded introduction to the subject.⁴⁶ It should serve a variety of different audiences: specialists and non-specialists;

academics, students and general readers; the secular and the religious. It brings together historians of Puritanism from both sides of the Atlantic, including younger scholars alongside some of the leading names in the field. And it ranges widely, both geographically and thematically.

Part One provides an overview of the history of English Puritanism, from its emergence as a polemical construct in the 1560s to its transmutation into Dissent in the later seventeenth century. It opens with a chapter on 'Antipuritanism' by Patrick Collinson, the doyen of historians of Puritanism. Collinson analyses 'the invention of Puritanism' by polemicists in the last decades of the sixteenth century – what he calls 'a defining moment in English culture'. As in earlier writings, he usefully problematises the concept of Puritanism, while highlighting its importance. There follow four chapters on Elizabethan Puritanism (John Craig), the early Stuart era (Tom Webster), 'the Puritan Revolution' (John Morrill) and the later Stuart period (John Spurr). Together these chapters constitute a concise narrative history of English Puritanism, one that introduces us to the key religious developments, the wider impact of the godly, and the major interpretive issues.

Part Two moves beyond England. Anthony Milton reminds us that Puritans were far from Anglocentric. They saw themselves as part of the wider Reformed tradition, and he examines the interchanges between Puritanism and the continental Reformed churches. Francis Bremer and David Hall tell the story of New England from the 1620s to 1720s, tracing the continuities and discontinuities between the Puritanism of the earliest settlers and that of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Their chapters summarise a rich and complex story, and distil the findings of an immense secondary literature. Later chapters also contain discussions of New England, but Part Two endeavours to broaden what has often been an exclusive focus on English and American Puritanism. New England has perhaps loomed larger in the minds of modern historians than it did in seventeenth-century imaginations, and the impact of Puritanism outside England and America has been rather neglected. There are signs that this is changing, and this volume reinforces the trend towards a more comparative and international approach to the subject. Crawford Gribben draws on recent scholarship to gauge the success of attempts to export English Puritanism to Ireland and Wales, arguing that these countries remained 'sites of anxiety' for the godly. Scotland was very different, for it had its own distinct Protestant tradition, quite independent of the Church of England. Margo Todd shows that Puritan-style hot Protestantism was alive and well

north of the border, and that the Scots were no strangers to the language of 'Puritanism'. Yet she also notes that, unlike their English counterparts, Scotland's godly were victorious, and hardly needed to demand 'further reformation'.

The chapters in Part Three explore a variety of major themes, synthesising existing research but also pointing us in new directions. Puritans produced a vast quantity of doctrinal and devotional books, and any serious study of the subject must engage with this formidable body of work. Charles Hambrick-Stowe's chapter helps us to see why Puritans were renowned for their practical divinity and affective piety. Dewey Wallace provides a panoramic overview of the polemical divinity of the godly, identifying their external enemies and internal divisions. Paul Lim shows how moderate Puritans like Richard Baxter sought to define the identity of the Church of England against both Laudians and radical Puritans, and argues that their ecclesiology was shaped by the goal of Christianisation. David Como turns the focus onto the radical Puritans, explaining how they emerged from within the godly community while moving well beyond the Puritan mainstream. Radical Puritanism was driven in part by eschatological hopes, but millenarianism was also intellectually respectable in this period, and Jeffrey Jue shows how the non-Puritan scholar Joseph Mede inspired a revival of millenarianism among some leading Puritan divines (especially Congregationalists). Alex Walsham explores the ambivalent relationship between Puritanism and popular culture, showing how the godly managed to make themselves at once popular and unpopular. Ann Hughes engages with another vital area of recent research, the study of gender. Her chapter attends carefully to the experience of Puritan women, while also discussing the gendered identity of Puritan men. Finally, Neil Keeble analyses the key features of Puritan literature, highlighting both its coherence and its distinctiveness.

The fourth and final part of the book contains two chapters on Puritanism and posterity. John Coffey addresses the vexed problem of Puritan legacies. He begins by reviewing some of the grand claims that have been made for Puritanism's historical significance, before turning to the reception and use of Puritan writings from the eighteenth century to the present day. The final chapter is by Peter Lake, who along with Patrick Collinson has been the most influential historian of English Puritanism in the past twenty-five years. Lake explains how the historiography of Puritanism has evolved since the 1960s, and how the notion of Puritanism has remained stubbornly central to the debate over the politics of Stuart England.

Notes

1. See Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain*, 11 vols. (London, 1655), ix. 76.
2. See Collinson (ch. 1 below).
3. M. Winship, 'Were there any Puritans in New England?', *New England Quarterly*, 74 (2001), 118–38, quotations on 137–8.
4. See C. Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971).
5. See P. Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (Harlow, 1989).
6. See J. S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible* (Oxford, 1970); C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1993); L. M. Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago, 2003).
7. See Milton (ch. 6).
8. A. Ryrie, 'The strange death of Lutheran England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), 64–92.
9. See M. Aston, 'Puritans and iconoclasm, 1560–1660', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), ch. 3.
10. See Lim (ch. 13); J. C. Davis, 'Against formality: one aspect of the English Revolution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1992), 265–88.
11. See Wallace (ch. 12); D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982).
12. See T. D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); D. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004).
13. See Craig (ch. 2).
14. P. Collinson has made many valuable contributions on this subject. See his *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 143; 'Ecclesiastical vitriol: religious satire in the 1590s and the invention of Puritanism', in J. Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 150–70; and *The Puritan Character: Polemics and Polarities in Early Seventeenth-Century English Culture* (Los Angeles, 1989). See also Collinson (ch. 1).
15. See Craig (ch. 2) and Webster (ch. 3).
16. See Hambrick-Stowe (ch. 11).
17. See P. Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 317–29, 518–26; Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, Parts I and II; and P. Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in Durston and Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism*, ch. 1.
18. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), p. 27.

19. P. Collinson, *English Puritanism* (London, 1983), p. 16; Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism', p. 46; Collinson, 'The Sherman's tree and the preacher: the strange death of Merry England in Shrewsbury and beyond', in P. Collinson and J. Craig, eds., *The Reformation in English Towns* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 215–16.
20. See P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982); P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982).
21. See Peter Lake's introduction to G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, second edition (Chicago, 1992), p. xx.
22. The fragmentation of Puritanism is examined by Morrill (ch. 4) and Como (ch. 14).
23. Compare the views of Todd (ch. 10) and Como (ch. 14).
24. See Spurr (ch. 5).
25. See Gribben (ch. 9).
26. See B. M. Levy, 'Early Puritanism in the southern and island colonies', *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 70 (1960), 69–163; K. Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge, 1993); K. Kupperman, 'Errand to the Indies: Puritan colonization from Providence Island through the Western Design', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 45 (1998), 70–99.
27. See Bremer (ch. 7) and Hall (ch. 8).
28. See Todd (ch. 10).
29. The varied reception of Puritanism in the Reformed churches is discussed by Milton (ch. 6), and by Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, pp. 521–6.
30. See Coffey (ch. 19).
31. Some of this work is discussed by Walsham (ch. 16) and Hughes (ch. 17).
32. See Lake (ch. 20).
33. See the chapters by Bremer and Hall (chs. 7 and 8). See also R. Archer, *Fissures in the Rock: New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Hanover, NH, 2001).
34. P. Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA, 1956), p. viii.
35. See Coffey (ch. 19).
36. The most important work is cited by Keeble (ch. 18).
37. G. F. Nuttall's studies of Puritanism include: *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946); *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1957); *The Welsh Saints, 1640–1660* (Cardiff, 1957); and *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (London, 1967). See also *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. G. F. Nuttall and N. H. Keeble, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1991).
38. To take just one example, R. T. Kendall coined the much-cited phrase 'experimental predestinarianism' in his book *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979), before becoming the minister of Westminster Chapel in London.
39. It was published recently by a seminary press: J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and the Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver, 2003).

40. Milton and Williams even have their own novels: Peter Ackroyd, *Milton in America* (London, 1996), and Mary Lee Settle, *I, Roger Williams: A Novel* (New York, 2001).
41. See especially Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*; P. Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001); M. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts* (Princeton, NJ, 2002).
42. C. van Dixhoorn, 'Reforming the Reformation: Theological debate in the Westminster Assembly, 1643–52', 7 vols., Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge (2004); <http://www.westminsterassembly.org/>.
43. M. Goldie, gen. ed., *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691*, 6 vols. (Woodbridge, 2007).
44. See M. B. Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002); M. Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (London, 2005); N. Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006).
45. R. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); D. Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christians and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600–1871* (Cambridge, 2005); J. Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York, 1998).
46. Readers looking for fuller coverage should consult *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, ed. F. Bremer and T. Webster, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA, 2006).

Further reading

Anthologies

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- Hall, David D., ed., *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
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- Vaughan, Alden, ed., *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620–1730*, revised edition. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997.
- Woodhouse, A. S. P., ed., *Puritanism and Liberty*, 3rd edn. London: J. M. Dent, 1992.

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- Bremer, Francis, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995.
- Bremer, Francis, and T. Webster, eds., *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clío, 2006.
- Collinson, Patrick, *English Puritanism*. London: Historical Association, 1983.
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I Antipuritanism

PATRICK COLLINSON

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Antipuritanism was antecedent to Puritanism, and so merits prior consideration. 'Puritans' were so identified by Antipuritans, out of an intense dislike of all that those people stood for, and it was some considerable time before this stereotypical, antithetical stigma hardened into something almost tangible, a word which instantly evoked a widely shared set of assumptions and prejudices; longer still before it was acknowledged and accepted as an honourable badge by those to whom it was attached. In the first instance, 'Puritans' were Puritans in the eye of the beholder and it is with the beholder that we should begin. This is, of course, a very common if not universal phenomenon. In the mid-seventeenth century 'Independent' was in origin a hostile construction deployed by those who came to be known as 'Presbyterians'.

The stigma 'Puritan' was at first a piece of *Antiprottestantism*, in that it may have originated with exiled Catholic polemicists who found this reference to ancient perfectionist heresies a convenient tar with which to brush the Elizabethan Protestant establishment. According to more than one source, the first Catholic controversialist to use the word was Nicholas Sander.¹ Thomas Stapleton, in a book printed in Antwerp in June 1565, refers, almost incidentally, to 'the Puritans off our countre'. John Martial, in a polemic about reverence for the cross (June 1566), has 'whote [hot] Puritanes of the new clergie' and 'a plaine, puritaine, and notorious protestant'.²

But these home thoughts from abroad were perhaps already indebted to the domestic and internecine quarrels between nonconformist and conformist elements in the Elizabethan church which had begun in 1565. Under the year 1567, the Londoner John Stow, a man of conservative religious opinions, referred to 'many congregations of the Anabaptysts in London, who cawlyd themselves Puritans or Unspottyd Lambs of the Lord'.³ Thomas Harding, in one of his books against Bishop Jewel, printed at Louvain a year later, seems to have picked up news of

these people. After a Cook's tour of Protestant Europe, a gazetteer of heretics all claiming to be the best thing since sliced bread, he concludes: 'Now last of al crepeth me forth one Browne at London with his vnspotted Congregation, otherwise called *Puritanes*. As we come laste, say they, so we are purest, and cleanest of al others.'⁴ Stow had named 'John Brown', and had reported that the 'Anabaptists' were called 'Brownynge'.

But we are still dealing with the prehistory of Puritanism and Antipuritanism, and we have not yet reached the binary opposition which was deeply rooted in those antithetical entities by the early seventeenth century. Those Catholic polemicists simply added the slur of 'Puritan' to a lengthy shopping list of deviant tendencies which proved that the Protestants, not their opponents, were hopelessly fragmented; not one nickname but as many as possible. Thus Richard Bristow found proof of schismatical heresy in the very fact that Protestants adopted new names: 'Lutherans, Caluinistes, Protestants, Precisians, Unspotted Brethern, and Puritans'. Later Bristow added to his shopping list 'Felowes of loue [scil., the Family of Love], Super-illuminates, Porklinges'. I cannot account for 'porklings'.⁵

By piling up lists of deviant entities and tendencies, this was a polemical strategy quite unlike the stark dualism of Puritan and Antipuritan. There are parallels with some of the Elizabethan cony-catching literature where the reader is introduced to a rich variety of subcultural and semicriminal specimens. Thomas Harman parades the following types of rogue: a ruffler, an upright-man, a hooker or angler, a wild rogue, a prigger or prancer, a palliard, a prater, the abram-man, who feigns insanity, the fresh-water mariner or whipjack, whose ship has been wrecked on Salisbury Plain, a dummerer, a jarkman, a patricio, a bawd-basket, a doxy, a dell, a kinchin mort, these last all female – and so on, almost ad infinitum.⁶ Here was a kind of fascination with the principle, to borrow a word coined by Sir Nicholas Bacon, of milliformity. (Bacon wrote of religion 'which of his own nature should be uniform, would against his nature have proved milliform'.)⁷ Milliformity is what this discourse is all about, and it is different from the language of binary opposition. We could travel forward some decades to major literary undertakings such as Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography* and, above all, to Thomas Edwards's anatomy of the teeming sects, real and imagined, of the mid-seventeenth century, *Gangraena*, which are equally exercises in polemical milliformity.⁸

At first, 'Puritan' was only one of several pejorative nicknames applied to 'the hotter sort of Protestants', and by no means the one most

frequently encountered. John Keltridge, vicar of Dedham in Essex in 1577–8 and, by his own account, the victim of sustained harassment by Protestants hotter than himself, calls his enemies ‘vain glorious men’, ‘precise men’, ‘schismatics’, and then, almost as an afterthought, remarks that such as ‘thinke them selves purest’ are ‘aptly’ named Puritans.⁹ At Maldon in the same county there was similar bad blood between the celebrated preacher and author George Gifford, who had been deprived for his nonconformity, and his successor as vicar, Robert Palmer. Palmer called Gifford’s adherents schismatics, ‘factious persons’. Like Keltridge, he also complained of ‘Anabaptisme’, but seems never to have used the P word. Mark Byford in his study of contentious religion in Elizabethan Colchester never came across it.¹⁰ An anonymous writer protests against such ‘despiteful names’ as ‘Puritanes, unspotted bretherne and suche lyke’ – ‘Anabaptists, Donatists, Aerians . . . Puritans, and I can not tell what’.¹¹

Already there are signs that ‘Puritan’ carried a particular punch, a useful word to round out a peroration. The fact that its first letter was ‘p’ made it a potential winner, for this was an age for some reason fascinated with alliterative ‘ps’, from John Heywood’s *The Playe called the Foure PP* to a remark by the martyrologist John Foxe about ‘preachers, printers and players’ troubling Bishop Stephen Gardiner.¹² ‘The Quintessence of Wit’, a libel circulated in Wells in 1607, has these lines: ‘Softe who goes ther, whatt p. P and P,/poxe, puncke and Puritan? the dyvell yt is/. . . for Sir, some tymes we see,/poxe, plageth Puncke, for Puritans amyse’. ‘Glister’, the ‘paraperopandectical doctor’ in Thomas Middleton’s play *The Family of Love* was noted for ‘his precise, Puritanical, and peculiar punk, his potecary’s drug’.¹³

But we are still a long way from Ockham’s razor and the simple polarity of ‘Puritan’ and, if not yet ‘Anglican’, conformable Protestant: a defining structural divide within English Protestantism, the fatal binary divide. In search of that destination it is striking that the most single-minded enemy the Puritans ever had, the future Archbishop Richard Bancroft, almost never in his various Antipuritan diatribes of the 1580s and 1590s used the word Puritan. You will find it only once in the early MS materials known, from a modern published version, as *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft*. The preferred term throughout is ‘Precisian’, employed hundreds of times (whereas ‘Scismatike’ is used only twice).¹⁴ Similarly, there are no Puritans, named as such, in Bancroft’s notorious sermon preached at Paul’s Cross in February 1588: only ‘schismatics’, ‘those of the new humour’, ‘the factious of our age’, ‘our new reformers’, ‘our new men’.¹⁵

And what of the two most substantial books of savage and sustained Antipuritan polemic, both published anonymously in 1593, but known to have been Bancroft's handiwork: *Davngerous Positions*, and *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline*? Both books pioneered the use of 'presbyterian', or rather 'presbiteriall', as in 'the Presbiteriall Discipline', which was now more specifically the target than the ill-defined 'Precisians'. Bancroft wrote of 'our owne Preachers in England, of the Disciplinarian consort', 'our English Genevians', 'our English Disciplinarians', 'our pretended English reformers'. But, once again, there are no 'Puritans' so designated in either of these books.

It was now almost thirty years since a Catholic émigré had opportunistically coined, or revived, the pejorative term 'Puritan' to define and defame the aspirations of those English Protestants too hot and too 'pure' to accept the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. Why, in a world of competitive, free-market semantics did it take so long for 'Puritan' to become the standard term for radical, progressive Protestantism? We come to a defining moment, mapping the English religious landscape for a hundred years to come.

THE INVENTION OF PURITANISM

It is not my purpose to suggest that nothing resembling 'Puritanism' existed, out there in the real rather than semantical and polemical world, until a convenient name was found for it; or that those who began to complain of 'Puritans' had invented a chimera, an imaginary opponent. Insofar as Peter Lake thought that that was what I was doing in writing about 'the invention of Puritanism', and placing that invention in the 1590s, there was a degree of misunderstanding.¹⁶ 'Invention' in formal rhetoric does not mean that something has been made up out of nothing. But Lake is correct in relating my 'invention of Puritanism' to the argument, in much of what I have written, that increasingly so-called 'Puritanism' represented not so much an insurgency against the Reformed Church of England as a vigorous and growing tendency within it. So the funny thing about Antipuritanism, which was as much a cultural and social as an ecclesiastical phenomenon, is that it grew in intensity just when Puritan nonconformity was in decline and many leading Elizabethan Puritans were making their peace with the powers that be, even with the bishops. But, if you think about it, that was not funny at all. It was precisely because so-called Puritans were so thoroughly absorbed in the fabric of society that Antipuritanism reared its ugly head.

Christopher Haigh, in an article on 'The character of an Antipuritan', having introduced us to the fictional Antipuritans depicted in several dialogic Puritan polemics, including George Gifford's *Countrie Divinitie* and Arthur Dent's *Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven*, goes out into the highways and byways of late-Elizabethan and Jacobean England to find that grass-roots Antipuritanism, hatred of the Puritans in their midst, really existed in many local communities, in streets and alehouses. 'Behind the polemical texts (and not very far behind them) was a reality: parishes where the godly reviled the godless and anti-puritans raged at "puritans"'.¹⁷

My point is that to know your enemy, and to have a convenient name for him, or it, resolves the mind wonderfully; that the invention of Puritanism in the sense that it so largely took over as the brand name for a certain kind of Protestant religiosity, social conduct and politics was indeed a defining moment in English culture, crystallising and making concrete in the public mind something, like all stigmatic stereotypes, partly imagined, bearing only a grossly oversimplified and distorted resemblance to the teeming chaos of reality. Language matters.

Haigh concedes that Antipuritan attitudes were 'doubtless' informed by stereotypes, but he privileges reality over and above the stereotypes. In a similar vein Peter Lake, writing about Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, says that none of the repartee in the play would have stood the remotest chance of getting a laugh 'if the mode of discourse . . . had not been instantly recognisable to the audience as the typical discourse of London puritanism'.¹⁸ Like some seventeenth-century Christopher Isherwood, Jonson was a camera, accurately depicting the reality of the London Puritan scene rather than inventing. But surely the point is that Jonson was both observing and inventing, which is what we all do as we both live and invent our own lives. It was Jonson, after all, who wrote: 'Our whole life is like a *Play*'.¹⁹ I do not think that Susan Kent, the daughter of a Wiltshire churchwarden at odds with his godly minister, would have made this the rhetorical climax of her tirade against the minister if the word had not been put into her head from some external source: 'We had a good parson here before but now we have a Puritan . . . a plague or a pox on him that ever he did come hither'.²⁰

So I agree with Ann Hughes that 'comprehending past societies means taking their polemical classifications seriously'.²¹ Two precious fragments of evidence suggest what was going on. In a jest-book by Thomas Dekker, one actor tells another: 'Marry, I have so naturally played the Puritan that many took me to be one.' And when the

celebrated and generously bearded divine John Dod visited the melancholic Mrs Joan Drake, in a professional capacity, she fell about laughing, 'in her thoughts likening him unto *Ananias*, one whom at a play in the Black-Friars [*The Alchemist*] she saw scoffed at, for a holy brother of *Amsterdam*' – stereotypical fiction and reality hopelessly confused and feeding upon each other.²² The stigmatic label 'Puritan' tells us about the two halves of a stressful relationship, a dialectical process rather than a state. Puritanism and Antipuritanism belong together.

There is no lack of sociological theory on the subject of stereotyping which could be fed in here. Much of the wisdom on this subject amounts to the observation (by Walter Lippman in *Public Opinion* (1922)): 'For the most part we do not first see and then define, we define first and then see.' Add to that Stuart Clark's observation that 'in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a predisposition to see things in terms of binary opposition was a distinctive aspect of a prevailing mentality'.²³ So it was that I wrote that 'the coherence of our concept of Puritanism depends upon knowing as little about particular puritans as possible'.²⁴ At their most extreme, the allegations of Antipuritanism were as close to reality as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

It was certain events and processes in the late 1580s and early 1590s which precipitated what I have called the invention of Puritanism, by hardening up Antipuritanism. The critical provocation was Martin Marprelate, the viciously clever antiprelatical libels printed and promulgated in the autumn and winter of 1588–9 under that name. C. S. Lewis compared the Tracts, a desperate *démarche* on the part of a few extreme Puritans, to the use of poison gas in warfare. A change in the wind can blow the poison back in the faces of those using it. Martin provoked and spawned a crop of Antimartins, equally sharp-edged libels written to order by a number of pens for hire, including Thomas Nashe and John Lyly.²⁵ According to Archbishop Whitgift, it was Richard Bancroft whose idea it was to have the Martinists answered 'after their own vein'.²⁶ The Antimartinist tracts have survived. Not so the little operettas, 'jigs', which, according to a stray reference 'lanced and wormed' Martin Marprelate and made him 'a Maygame upon the stage'. This strategy was roundly condemned by Francis Bacon in one of his earliest literary compositions, never once naming Bancroft but clearly gunning for him. The greater blame, wrote Bacon, attached 'to the invention of him, who (as it seemeth) pleased himself in it as in no mean policy, that these men are to be dealt withal at their own weapons'. 'The second blow makes the fray'.²⁷

Authority agreed with Bacon. On 12 November 1589, five Privy Councillors wrote to Archbishop Whitgift complaining of 'some inconveniences by the common plaies and enterludes, played and exercised in and about the cyttie of London', which had taken upon them to 'handle in their playes certen matters of divinitie and of state', requesting the archbishop to form a committee for the censorship of the stage.²⁸ But the damage had been done, and the stage Puritan, which was for Antipuritanism what the V1 rocket was for the Germans in the Second World War, had been launched. The Marprelate Tracts were themselves histrionic, exploiting the innate theatricality of the bishops in their vestments, and bringing onto a literary stage a figure evidently modelled on the famous comedian Richard Tarleton, who had recently died. Although the evidence is slim, and the play texts have not survived, I believe that the theatrical backlash masterminded by Bancroft with, it appears, Lyly his impresario, was a defining moment. Gabriel Harvey supplies a couple of titles: *The Zealous Love-Letter, or Corinthian Epistles to the Widow*, and *The Holie Oath of the Martinistes, That, Thinking to Swear by His Conscience, Swore by His Concupiscence*. 'Puritans' and 'Martinists' were equally the target of both down-market and up-market polemics throughout the 1590s, a decade, as I have suggested elsewhere, of 'ecclesiastical vitriol'. But 'Puritan' proved to have more staying power than 'Martinist'.²⁹

Two studies of the stage Puritan, Aaron Mitchell Myers's *Representation and Misrepresentation of the Puritan in Elizabethan Drama* (Philadelphia, 1931) and William Holden's *Anti-Puritan Satire, 1572–1642* (New Haven, 1954) pick up numerous almost incidental stage references to Puritans from the 1590s (but virtually none before the nineties), with perhaps the earliest use of the word to be found in Marlowe's *The Massacre of Paris* (1593): 'kill the Puritans', 'overthrow these factious Puritans'.³⁰ Students of the drama have identified *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592) as the play in which the Puritan character first appears, in the guise of 'Priest': 'Thus do we blind the world with holiness,/And so by that are termed pure Precisians.' But 'Priest' is never called a Puritan, and it is most unlikely that in *A Knack to Know a Knave*, a rather old-fashioned piece, we have one of the lost anti-Martinist plays.³¹ By the time of *Twelfth Night* it was possible to tell the audience that Malvolio was in some ways a Puritan, in others not, since any well-informed theatre-goer could recognise what there was of the stage Puritan in his character; and so too with Angelo in *Measure for Measure*.

With Thomas Middleton we come to the most consistently Antipuritan of all the dramatists, and to a treatment of the subject more than merely incidental.³² In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the *dramatis personae* includes 'the Puritans'. In *Your Five Gallants*, Novice is asked whether he can carry himself 'cunningly and seem holy'. 'O fear not that, sir, for my friends were all Puritans.' In *The Mayor of Quinborough*, Oliver is told: 'a pox on your Puritan face'. It is possible that Middleton wrote the play called *The Puritan*, once part of the Shakespeare apocrypha. And he certainly wrote *The Family of Love*, which of course is not about the Familists at all but about Puritans.³³

The genie was now out of the bottle and its exit was lubricated by the new fashion for smart, satirical literary genres: epigrams, and the little books called 'characters', a genre invented in the classical world by Theophrastus of Athens, both pioneered by the future bishop, Joseph Hall, and soon all the rage. Meanwhile, Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair* mark the apotheosis of theatrical Antipuritanism. The resonances of *Bartholomew Fair* were both provincial (Banbury) and metropolitan (London) – mainly the latter according to Peter Lake. (But it is not clear that the metropolitan sophistication of Antipuritanism could have managed without a sneer at the provinces, the Banburys of that world.)³⁴

To go into the provinces: in these same early Jacobean years, there were Antipuritan storms in the teacups of many provincial towns, normally expressed in defamatory libels and ballads, a piece of street politics symptomatic of urban factional politics, and now finding a new voice in complaints about Puritans. To repeat a point already made: it was because of the increasing social and political ascendancy of the godly in these towns that opponents found an Antipuritan voice. Ironically enough, it was to this street theatre of ephemeral libelling that the Marprelate Tracts themselves belonged, transcending the medium by making it into print, unlike most such effusions.³⁵ The latest historian of this phenomenon, who writes of 'the idiom of odium', tells us: 'The towns were often the greatest centres of mockery, in derogation of religion as of other forms of authority.' In Nottingham, godly and antigodly factions libelled against each other. When the mayor Thomas Nix asked a piper to perform a song in an alehouse, the musician was interrupted in mid-course: 'That's not the song, I mean the song of the Puritans of Nottingham.' When John White began his famous and famously contested ministry in Dorchester, a leading local figure composed a libel addressed 'to the execrable Companie of Puritans and the deepest dissembling Anabaptistes of this tyme'.³⁶

To savour these bitter religious-cum-factional street wars, we have to imagine ourselves back into the small world of face-to-face, which could so easily become back-to-back, communities of three or four thousand people. In Stratford-upon-Avon, with Shakespeare scarcely cold in his grave, it was said that a newly dominant faction, only seven in number, 'Puritans no doubt', had 'set all the town together by the ears, which is the true office of a Puritan'. Resentment was expressed in a rhyming and libellous ballad attacking 'the Chief Rulers in the Synagogue of Stratford'.³⁷ How far these episodes, and these texts, were generated at the grass roots, and how far they depended on the sophistication of London wits to lend them 'rhyme and reason', is a good question for cultural historians.³⁸ But there can be no doubt that in these events, and at that level, a kind of popular culture and literate sophistication, both Antipuritan, coalesced.

The successive volumes emerging from Toronto, 'Records of Early English Drama', provide copious evidence from every corner of the land that manifestations of Antipuritanism were provoked and fuelled by the efforts of the godly to suppress the traditional pastimes of Merry England: maypoles, morris dances, church ales and the like. There were battles over maypoles and market crosses in Banbury, long-running culture wars in Chester, and – a cause célèbre in Wells – the charivari in which the rich Puritan clothier and constable John Hole was pilloried.³⁹ The Antipuritanism which was the defence, in polite circles, of rustic festivity, in embryo the politics of royalism, found its fulfillment in Robert Dover's Cotswold Games, celebrated in the collection of verses called *Annalia Dubrensia* (1636), compiled by Michael Drayton, Ben Jonson and other poets: 'Here they advance true love and neighbourhood,/ And doe both Church and Common-wealth the Good,/ In spite of Hipocrites, who are the worst/ Of subjects. Let such envie till they burst!'⁴⁰

THE CHARACTER OF A PURITAN

'Hypocrites' leads us to those clever distorting mirrors which were the newly fashionable Theophrastan 'characters', where hypocrisy was the kind of key signature for everything else attributed to Puritans. We should notice in passing two weighty and thoroughly tedious polemical treatises disguised, perhaps to make them saleable, as characters, *The Picture of a Puritane* (1605) and *The Pictvre of a Papist* (1606), which partly depended for their impact on the fact that the author, Oliver Ormerod, was, as he tells us on the title-page, 'of Emmanuel Colledge in Cambridge', a byword for Puritanism. I am not concerned so much with

the argument, which, in the case of *The Picture of a Puritane*, consists of eighty-one pages of discussion between 'the Germaine' and 'the Englishman' designed to prove that English Puritans were indistinguishable from German Anabaptists, or if anything worse. I am more interested in Ormerod's books as exercises in labelling and word-play, with once again much play made of the initial letter 'P'. *The Picture of a Puritane* is accompanied by a sub-text: *Puritano Papismus: or a Discoverie of Puritan Papisme*, which presents Puritanism and Popery as different versions of the same thing. And *The Pictvre of a Papist* is, similarly, accompanied by an attendant treatise, *Pagano-papismus: Wherein is Prooued by Irrefragable Demonstrations, that Papisme is Flat Paganisme*. I am particularly struck by this statement in the Preface to *The Pictvre of a Papist*: 'Plutarch mentioneth a certaine painter, who when he had made a goose & a cocke both alike, was faine to write ouer their heads for distinction sake: *this is a goose, this is a cock*. I haue now drawn (*curteous Readers*) the picture of a Puritane and of a Papist, and haue set ouer theyre heads with *Plutarches painter, this is a goose, this is a cock: this is a Puritane, this is a papist*.' Ormerod was already engaged, he tells us, on a third book to be called *The True Picture of a Protestant* (note the three Ps) but such a book was never, I think, published.

Ormerod points us towards a game which all sorts of people seem to have played in the first decade of the seventeenth century: a game of definition, beginning 'A Puritan is . . .', generically lying somewhere between a skeletal character and something out of a jest book. One of the most familiar examples occurs in the diary kept by the young man about town, Thomas Manningham: a Puritan was 'such a one as loves God with all his soul, but hates his neighbour with all his heart'.⁴¹ It was another conceit to classify the varieties of Puritan in the manner of a pseudo-academic exercise. The genus to which the species belonged was Protestant; the species itself, a nonconformist. But in 1631 Giles Widdowes, in a polemic called *The Schysmatical Puritan*, found no less than ten 'specificall kinds' of Puritan nonconformist.⁴² It would miss the point entirely for a historian to decide on this evidence that there really were ten kinds of Puritan, neither more nor less.

What fed into and out of the character literature, and the Antipuritan stage repertoire, were some more or less consistent elements of the stereotype. One outward sign of the Puritan's inner hypocrisy is his (or her) gaze lifted heavenwards, showing the white of the eye. The 'devout meal-mouth'd precisian' in a satire by John Marston of 1598 'says with a turn'd up eye a solemn grace of half an hour'. The Puritan wife in Middleton's *Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fools* (1619) 'openeth her

Bible, and makes show to read, and many times turns her eye with the white upward'. A character in a play by Thomas Dekker speaks of a woman who carries a feather bed and a man in it 'in her minde, when in the streete she cast up the white of her eye like a Puritane'.⁴³ Another shibboleth is the pious nasal whine. In the play *The World Tost at Tennis* by Middleton and Rowley, Whitestarch is a 'starch Puritan with the blue nostril, whose tongue lies i' thy nose'.⁴⁴ Puritans can be lean and hungry, but they can also be fat, like Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*. Mrs Littlewhit complains of Busy: 'We have such a tedious life with him for his diet, and his clothes too! he breaks his buttons, and cracks seams at every saying he sobs out.' Sir Thomas Overbury's character of a Puritan breathes fatness and flatulence: 'Ignorance, and fat feede, are his founders, his Nurses Raylings, Rabbies and round breeches: his life is but a borrowed blast of wind.' Falstaff is a notable example of the fat Puritan.⁴⁵

What lies behind the fraudulent piety are the very sins which Puritans attribute to the ungodly: unprincipled greed, deception and dishonesty; and, especially, sexual depravity, found in both sexes. In *Two Lamentable Tragedies* a character exclaims: 'Is this the fruit of Saint-like Puritans? I never liked such damn'd hypocrisy.' In Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, a female Puritan says: 'Children are blessings, If they be got with zeal by the brethren.'⁴⁶ In Middleton's *The Family of Love* we find the ancient trope of brothers and sisters blowing out the candles in their conventicles in order to indulge in all kinds of mischief. Ben Jonson and his Scottish friend, William Drummond of Hawthornden, shared a dirty joke about a gentlewoman who longed to lie with the preacher John Dod 'for the procreation of an Angel or Saint'. But it proved 'but an ordinary birth'.⁴⁷

The Antipuritan stereotype reached its apogee, its ultimate elaboration, in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, the English *Don Quixote*, which dates from about 1658, by which time Antipuritanism had been greatly reinforced by events. The poem is an *omnium gatherum* of 11,298 lines. The mock knight errant Hudibras is a 'Presbyterian true blew', always calling for *A godly-thorough-Reformation*, 'as if Religion were intended/ For nothing else but to be mended./ A Sect, whose chief Devotion lies/ In odde perverse Antipathies.' Hudibras is a fat glutton, particularly fond of black puddings. When his journey takes him into the middle of a 'rough riding' or 'skimmington' (the episode memorably depicted by Hogarth), he demands: 'What means (quoth he) this dev'ls *Procession*/ With men of *Orthodox* Profession? . . . Are things of Superstitious *function* / Fit to be us'd in *Gospel Sunshine*?'⁴⁸

We may end by reflecting again on the perfect reciprocity of Antipuritanism and Puritanism, terrible and inseparable twins brilliantly characterised by Peter Lake in a dissection of 'the complex dialectical relationships between the Puritan and anti-Puritan images'. Puritans constructed an image of the ungodly as pharisaical, hypocritical, proud and divisive. Antipuritans constructed an image of the godly as pharisaical, hypocritical, proud and divisive. To explain the social and psychological imperatives operating in this dialectical relationship would require another essay. But Lake is helpful: 'The processes of accentuation or caricature at the heart of this image-making were in part a function of the projection onto the polemically defined other of those aspects of the observer's own position and situation that he or she least wanted to face or own.'⁴⁹

Notes

1. Thomas Wilcox named Sander as the inventor in a publication of 1581 (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, art. Wilcox). The attribution was picked up by the German tourist Paul Hentzner in 1598 (*England as Seen by Foreigners*, ed. W. B. Rye (London, 1865), p. 111).
2. Thomas Stapleton, *A Fortresse of the Faith* (Antwerp, 1565), fol. 134^v; John Martial, *A Replie to M. Calfhills Blasphemous Answer* (Louvain, 1566), sigs. 185, 80^r.
3. 'Stowe's Memoranda', *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Society (London, 1880), p. 143.
4. Thomas Harding, *A Detection of Sundrie Foule Errours* (Louvain, 1568), sig. 332^r.
5. Richard Bristow, *A Briefe Treatise of Diuerse Plaine and Sure Wayes to Finde out the Truthe* (Antwerp, 1574), sig. Bii; *Demavndes to bee proponed of Catholikes to the Heretikes* (Antwerp, 1576), p. 26. I owe these references to Alex Walsham.
6. *The Elizabethan Underworld*, ed. A. V. Judges (London, 1930), pp. 61–118. See also F. Aydelotte, *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (Oxford, 1910); G. Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1977).
7. *The Remains of Edmund Grindal*, ed. W. Nicholson, Parker Society (Cambridge, 1843), p. 147.
8. A. Hughes, *'Gangraena' and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).
9. *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church: Dedham and Bury St Edmunds, 1582–1590*, ed. P. Collinson, J. Craig and B. Usher, Church of England Record Society, 10 (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. lxix–lxx.
10. Essex Record Office, DB/3/3/178; M. S. Byford, 'The price of Protestantism: assessing the impact of religious change in Elizabethan Essex: the

- cases of Heydon and Colchester, 1558–1594' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1988), p. 5.
11. *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, ed. A. Peel (Cambridge, 1915), I. 84–6.
 12. Quoted in P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 103.
 13. C. J. Sisson, *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 183–5; *The Family of Love*, III. vii. 58–9. 'Punk' in contemporary parlance meant prostitute.
 14. *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft*, ed. A. Peel (Cambridge, 1953).
 15. Richard Bancroft, *A Sermon preached at Pavls Crosse the 9. of February . . . 1588* (London, 1588).
 16. P. Collinson, 'Ecclesiastical vitriol: religious satire in the 1590s and the invention of Puritanism', in J. Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 150–70; P. Lake with M. Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 568–9.
 17. C. Haigh, 'The character of an Antipuritan', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35 (2004), 671–88.
 18. Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, p. 604.
 19. *Timber, or Discoveries*, in C. H. Herford, P. Simpson and E. Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52), VIII. 146.
 20. Haigh, 'The character of an Antipuritan', 684, 681.
 21. Hughes, *Gangraena*, p. 11.
 22. P. Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: the theatre constructs Puritanism', in D. L. Smith, R. Strier and D. Bevington, eds., *The Theatrical City* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 157.
 23. S. Clark, 'Inversion, misrule and the meaning of witchcraft', *Past & Present*, 87 (1980), 105.
 24. P. Collinson, *From Cranmer to Bancroft* (London, 2006), p. 105.
 25. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, art. Martin Marprelate.
 26. *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft*, p. xviii.
 27. 'An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England', in B. Vickers, ed., *Francis Bacon* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 1–19.
 28. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), IV. 306–7. In 1996 Lambeth Palace Library acquired a copy of this letter, which is reproduced in facsimile in the *Lambeth Palace Library Annual Review* for that year.
 29. Collinson, 'Ecclesiastical vitriol'; Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*', p. 167.
 30. Myers, *Representation and Misrepresentation of the Puritan in Elizabethan Drama* (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 28.
 31. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–2; M. G. M. Adkins, 'The genesis of dramatic satire against the Puritans, as illustrated in *A Knack to Know a Knave*', *The Review of English Studies*, 32 (1946), 81–95.
 32. Myers, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, pp. 35–6.
 33. However, C. W. Marsh in *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550–1630* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 205–13 argues that the play was about the Familists.

34. Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*; Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*'.
35. Collinson, 'Ecclesiastical vitriol', pp. 161–4.
36. A. Fox, 'Religious satire in English towns, 1570–1640', in P. Collinson and J. Craig, eds., *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500–1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 221–40; A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 6, 'Ballads and Libels'.
37. E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare: Man and Artist* (Oxford, 1938), II. 838–45; P. Collinson, *Elizabethans* (London and New York, 2003), p. 249.
38. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*; Collinson, 'Ecclesiastical vitriol', p. 160.
39. Collinson, 'Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair*', pp. 160–3; REED Chester, REED Somerset.
40. P. Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 40–1.
41. *The Diary of John Manningham*, ed. R. P. Sorlien (Hanover, NH, 1976), p. 218.
42. Giles Widdowes, *The Schysmatical Puritan* (London, 1631), sigs. A1, B2.
43. *Works of John Marston*, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1887), III. 271; Myers, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, p. 130; Thomas Dekker, *The Wonder of a Kingdome* (London, 1623), I. i.
44. Myers, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, p. 36.
45. *The Overburian Characters*, ed. W. J. Taylor (Oxford, 1936), pp. 26–7; K. Poole, 'Saints alive! Falstaff, Martin Marprelate and the staging of Puritanism', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46 (1995), 47–75.
46. Myers, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, pp. 122, 124, 128–9.
47. *Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford, Simpson and Simpson, I. 146.
48. Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. J. Wilders (Oxford, 1967), pp. 7, 10, 147.
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2 The growth of English Puritanism

JOHN CRAIG

In the last week of March 1585, nine clothiers from the small market town of Dedham in Essex resolved some sober business. The local vicar, Richard Parker, who commented afterwards upon the business, described what took place as a 'protestacion' and noted, significantly, that 'it was offered them the 20 of march 1585'. Yet the surviving text calls itself a 'profession freely made and approved by the voyces and handes of us whose names are underwritten' and the terms are revealing, for this was no simple set of orders akin to those found in other larger boroughs concerned primarily with the pressing issues of unemployment, poverty, unlicensed alehouses and the social order. Although the word covenant is nowhere used, the text makes clear that what was agreed in March was a covenant, perhaps the earliest recorded example of such in the Elizabethan church. In a series of solemn oaths or promises, the Dedham clothiers expressed their determination to be the sharp edge of reformation in their community, so many godly exemplars for their poorer, illiterate neighbours. Eleven times, promises were made 'reverently' or 'willingly' to encourage participation in Dedham's monthly communions and weekly lectures, to extend hospitality on Sundays to 'the poorer and weaker sort', to use all means to correct and reform those who misbehaved in church or who profaned the Sabbath day and to uphold the credit of the godly preachers.¹ The Dedham covenant predates the more famous covenant agreed in 1588 between Richard Rogers and twenty of his Wethersfield (Essex) parishioners who were said to 'exceed the common sort of them that professe the Gospell'. Rogers insisted that his covenanted group were no separatists, but 'diligent and ordinarie frequenters of the publicke assemblies with the people of God' whose meetings were not for the 'disturbing of the state of the church and peace thereof'.² From a clerical perspective, these 'protestacions' were perhaps one way to prevent those that advocated further reformation from slipping into separatism. But the evidence is also compelling testimony of the

corporate sense of purpose and identity forged and maintained by groups of obscure godly folk and a reminder that much of the earlier scholarship that saw English Puritanism as an exclusively clerical movement left a great deal to be explained.

In his classic, if misleading, account of *Tudor Puritanism* first published in 1939, M.M. Knappen argued that the story of English Puritanism began in 1524, the year that William Tyndale left England for Germany in order to prepare an English translation of the Bible.³ Sixty years on from Knappen, the origins of a subject best seen as part of a dynamic, awkward and contentious relationship involving as much those who were actively opposed or indifferent to the drive for further reformation of the church, can no longer be dated so precisely. Puritanism was but part of a larger story of religious and cultural change that swept with force through the British Isles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and insofar as the English Bible was a vital element in that story of cultural change, Knappen was on solid ground when he began his account in 1524. Yet English Puritans, or godly folk as they preferred to be called, were not unique in their acknowledgement of the authority of holy writ. The nub of their many disputes with those in authority lay in how far the demands of scripture applied to all areas of life, including those agreed to be *adiaphora*, things indifferent to the central issue of salvation. Their conviction that only those matters that had the clear command or warrant of scripture might be allowed in the church expressed itself in an active searching for the meaning of the biblical text. The apostle Paul commended the Bereans for searching the scriptures and might well have commended these English Protestants for the same. So many of the texts and letters, both manuscript and printed, that form the corpus of Elizabethan Puritan debates overflow with scripture. Discussions and debates over the liturgy and ceremonies, or the application of the fourth commandment, are soaked in scripture. The ramifications of such debates might have proved inconsequential had the context been a cell of Lollardy in the remoter parts of Hertfordshire. When Protestantism came to the fore, first in the reign of Edward VI, and again under Elizabeth, the divisions could not be ignored.

As Patrick Collinson has taught us, this was, above all, an Elizabethan story.⁴ It is one of the ironies of this story that the twin pillars of the Elizabethan church, the separate acts of uniformity and supremacy passed by parliament in 1559 that restored the Protestant character of the church with Elizabeth as supreme governor, should be known to posterity as the Elizabethan settlement. In the minds of many,

this was but an opening gambit, not the done deal. The unique political circumstances of a young queen on the throne with an uncertain succession helped initially to restrain the impatience of those eager for reform. Returning exiles, such as John Jewel, future bishop of Salisbury, privately deplored what they felt to be the slow pace of reform, but were content to give public support to the regime and the overwhelming number of the returning Marian exiles found positions in the newly Reformed church. Although Elizabeth's doughty Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, had defended the acts of uniformity and supremacy with a warning as much against those 'that be too swift as those that be too slow', this clear indication that reformation would proceed at the government's pace did little to dampen the sense of expectancy. There was a great deal of work to be done as the new bishops implemented the royal injunctions that reformed the worship of thousands of parish churches and sought to secure the resources for a 'godly preaching ministry'. From the outset, however, had anyone cared to ask, fundamental tensions might have been revealed between Elizabeth's understanding of a Reformed church and the views of many of her bishops and clergy. Nowhere were these more sharply differentiated than over the issue of preaching where Elizabeth's professed preference for the book of homilies stood in sharp contrast to the widespread agreement amongst her bishops for a learned preaching ministry. The practicalities of implementing this might be, and were, debated, but the success of the pastoral ideal of a learned preaching ministry was complete.⁵

A direct clash over preaching and clerical standards would come later. Initially it was clothing, specifically clerical garb, that proved the occasion of the first serious divisions among English Protestants, in which the 'trifle' of a white surplice raised larger issues of conformity to the sense and spirit of scripture and obedience to princely commands. What should be the appropriate apparel, indeed appearance, for a Reformed ministry? English Reformers were concerned to distinguish themselves as much as possible from their predecessors whom the lean and thinly bearded John Jewel had sneered at as so many 'oily, shaven, portly hypocrites'. Ideally, tonsured, celibate mass priests were to be replaced with bearded, married preachers, or pastors, whose preferred costume was a black academic gown. It galled these men that while the Elizabethan authorities had discarded much of the pre-Reformation costume, they insisted on the continued use of a white surplice and a four-cornered clerical cap. Although the issue is usually seen as primarily a clerical affair, it is clear that a broader popular prejudice informed the debate, a reflection that for many English men and women,

clerical attire was, like apparel more generally, an emotive issue of wider cultural and religious significance. In 1555, the Marian martyr, Rowland Taylor, 'trussed up in massing garments', mockingly remarked in the midst of his service of degradation, that if he were paraded in Cheapside, he would prove a laughing stock to boys. In 1564, the future archdeacon of Essex, George Withers, claimed that his opposition to the four-cornered cap stemmed entirely from the regard he had for the sentiments of his congregation in Bury St Edmunds who detested his headwear. And in 1589, the vicar of Boxted in Essex prudently left off wearing his surplice, knowing full well that 'some that came owt of Suffolk side would have liked him the worse yf he had worne it'.⁶

The issue had roots in the Edwardian Reformation. The bitter clash that took place in 1550 between John Hooper who refused to be consecrated in traditional vestments and Thomas Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley who insisted on their use was a foretaste of things to come and it proved significant that those in authority won this particular quarrel.⁷ As the experience of exile exposed English Protestants to the practices of the Reformed churches in Strasbourg, Basel, Zurich and Geneva, they inevitably raised the question of how far the Edwardian services should be adhered to in very different circumstances. The divisions that beset the English exiles in Frankfurt and that later became the subject of an important tract printed anonymously in 1574 clearly linked the later Elizabethan debates about the prayer book and ceremonies to the experiences of the exiles.⁸ Yet exile was not simply, or even primarily, the source of strife; it was also the matrix from which the two most influential printed works for English Puritans, the *Geneva Bible* (1560) and John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (first edition, 1563) emerged. The influence of neither can be said to have been the peculiar preserve of English Puritans but there was an affinity with, and use of both works by the godly that was vital to godly practice and identity.

The debate over clerical vestments gave its name to what historians would call the vestiarian controversy but the initial confrontation arose as much over a range of niggling instances of nonconformity as it did on this one issue, as godly ministers, impatient of reform, decided various matters within their own parishes. Zealous ministers discreetly omitted parts of the liturgy in order to leave more time for the sermon and the singing of metrical psalms. Some omitted the sign of the cross in baptism or the use of a ring at weddings; others abandoned the use of the organ or bowing at the name of Jesus. Above all, they rejected the use of the white surplice and clerical cap. When Archbishop Parker was sharply reproved by the queen in January 1565 for his neglect of the 'growing

diversity of opinions and specially in the external, decent and lawful rites and ceremonies to be used in the churches', the resultant book of articles insisting on ceremonial conformity and known as the *Advertisements*, set the stage for the first major campaign for conformity that targeted nonconformists in London and the universities. Matters came to a head in March 1566 when thirty-seven London ministers were suspended for refusing to wear the prescribed vestments. A handful of deprivations followed, most notably that of Thomas Sampson, who was removed as dean of Christ Church. But Parker failed in his attempt to deprive Laurence Humphrey of the presidency of Magdalen College, Oxford and it is clear that any effective silencing of the opponents of clerical dress was foiled as much by the patchwork quilt of ecclesiastical livings and jurisdictions that protected ministers who refused the 'Romish rags' as it was stymied by opposition at court.⁹ Over time, episcopal insistence on the clerical cap appears to have withered away. Use of the surplice, however, remained a constant test of conformity throughout Elizabeth's reign and beyond, and churchwardens in some archdeaconries became adept at responding to ecclesiastical articles in ways that sought to protect their Puritan ministers. The hated garment might be lost, or misplaced or in need of mending. The initial clash over clerical dress, regretted by many, paved a way to the more bracing challenge that came a few years later. Nonconformity had been punished and the smart of that experience only brought the issues of power and discipline in the English church more sharply into relief.

The central issue, however, remained the parlous state of the ministry in England. This was the theme of Edward Dering's magnificently reckless sermon when called to preach before the queen in February 1570. Dering, scion of an ancient line of Kentish gentry, threw away all hope of preferment in order to confront the queen with a catalogue of sins that beset the church – the impropriation of livings, the wiles of greedy, worldly patrons and clergy who preferred to hawk and hunt – concluding with a charge against Elizabeth in the plainest of terms: 'And yet you in the meane while that all these whordoms are committed, you at whose hands God will require it, you sit still and are carelesse, let men doe as they list. It toucheth not belike your common wealth, and therefore you are so well contented to let all alone.'¹⁰ At about the same time that these words were uttered, Thomas Cartwright, the newly elected Lady Margaret professor of divinity at Cambridge gave a series of lectures (in Latin) on the Acts of the Apostles in which his exposition of the government of the early church weighed present practices and found them wanting. In particular, his exegesis found no

basis for archbishops and bishops. In the resultant stir that followed, Cartwright was deprived of his chair and acquired a status as a champion of sorts to those who wanted to remodel the English church along presbyterian lines. The anomaly of a Reformed church that had retained its pre-Reformation government of archbishops, bishops, deans and archdeacons was not lost on a generation of ministers brought up on the theology of John Calvin and conscious of the example of the 'best reformed churches', congregations of which were present in London and elsewhere.

Authors of university lectures or a single royal sermon might justly be characterised as lone voices crying in the wilderness. When, however, attempts to legislate reform of the church in the parliament of 1571 were checked by the crown, frustration with the state of reform in England went public in a new way with the publication in 1572 of an anonymous composite manifesto entitled *An Admonition to the Parliament*. Ostensibly an appeal to the members of parliament, in reality the tract was an appeal to the public in the form of an indictment especially of the government of the Reformed Church of England that pulled no punches and became an instant bestseller. The authors, John Field and Thomas Wilcox, both young London ministers, trenchantly asserted that 'we in England are so far off from having a church rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God's word, that as yet we are not¹¹ come to the outward face of the same'. The warning was dire: 'Either we must have right ministry to God and a right government of his church, according to the scriptures set up (both which we lack) or else there can be no right religion.' Right government of the church meant a presbyterian polity of doctors, preachers, elders and deacons: 'instead of an Archbishop or Lord bishop, you must make equalitie of ministers'. It was high time for the English church to conform its polity to those of international Calvinism: 'Is a reformation good for France? And can it be evil for England? Is discipline meet for Scotland? And is it unprofitable for this realm?' Where the *Admonition* was a strong yet measured argument for a presbyterian polity, the appendant 'view of popishe abuses yet remaining in the English church' was full of biting satire. In a passage now famous, the prayer book was condemned as 'an unperfected book, culled and picked out of that popishe dunghill the Masse book, full of all abominations'. Reading the service was as 'evil as playing upon a stage and worse'. At least players memorised their parts; many clerics 'can scarcely read within book', they were but 'empty feeders, blind eyes, unsavoury salt'. The reading of the psalms was said to be tossed 'in most places like tennis balls'. Cathedrals were condemned as 'dens of all

loitering lubbers'; the archbishop's court was a 'filthy quagmire and poisoned splash' while commissary courts were but 'a petty little stinking ditch that floweth out of that former great puddle'.¹²

The publication of the *Admonition* and the controversy that ensued marked a break akin to that caused by a later tract that called for separation from the established church under the cry of reformation without tarrying for the magistrate.¹³ Not only had the Admonitioners directly attacked the English episcopate, their advocacy of 'discipline' exposed a fault-line between radical presbyterians and more moderate Puritans. Field and Wilcox were imprisoned for a year in Newgate. John Whitgift, master of Trinity College, Cambridge, was enlisted to respond to the *Admonition*. Thomas Cartwright retaliated with an attack on Whitgift's response and the resultant publications on both sides ensured that debates over ecclesiology remained in the public eye throughout the 1570s and 1580s. Notable works came from Walter Travers, whose treatise *Ecclesiasticae Disciplinae Explicatio* of 1574 was printed a year later in English and the dean of Salisbury, Dr John Bridges, tried in 1587 to overwhelm all opposition with a printed tsunami, his 1,400 folio pages in *Defence of the Government Established*. This was the controversy that caused Richard Hooker to pen his famous *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* but by the time he did, much of the heat of this debate had dissipated.

An opportunity to heal the breach came with the elevation of Edmund Grindal as archbishop of Canterbury in December 1575 and the early months of his appointment raised hopes that many of the abuses identified by the godly would now be addressed. Yet within a year of his appointment, Grindal had fallen afoul of the queen. The issue that brought about his downfall was the preaching conferences known as prophesyings instituted primarily as a way of instructing less able clergy. In some places, the proceedings were opened to the laity. The queen, hearing of some 'disorders' reported in connection with these exercises, ordered Grindal to suppress the prophesyings and limit the number of preachers in each county. Grindal was horrified and, invoking the example of the letters written by Ambrose to the emperor Theodosius, wrote a courageous, if impolitic, defence of the exercises of prophesying, stating that he could not 'with safe conscience and without the offence of the majesty of God, give my assent to the suppressing of the said exercises. Bear with me, I beseech you Madam, if I choose rather to offend your earthly majesty than to offend against the heavenly majesty of God.'¹⁴ The queen chose not to bear with Grindal who was suspended, sequestered and very nearly deprived.

The elevation of John Whitgift in 1583 to Canterbury marked a change in ecclesiastical policy. A testy disciplinarian who could not brook to be crossed by younger men, Whitgift was determined to bring to heel those who flouted ecclesiastical authority. Part of a comprehensive programme of reform issued to the dioceses in October 1583 included a demand that all clergy subscribe to three articles. The first and third of these, endorsing the royal supremacy and Thirty-Nine Articles, were relatively uncontroversial. It was the second article, requiring clergy to subscribe that the Book of Common Prayer contained 'nothing in it contrary to the word of God' with an agreement to use the same and none other, that stuck in many throats. The attempt to root out radicals using this kind of dragnet created an uproar. Ministers who refused to subscribe to the three articles were suspended. The new archbishop found himself on the receiving end of delegations and petitions that tended only to infuriate him. 'Thou boy, beardless boy, yesterday bird, new out of shell', he stormed at a minister from Kent seeking exemption. By March 1584 it was clear that Whitgift's policy had stirred up a hornet's nest of opposition and in time he was persuaded, chiefly by Lord Burghley and Francis Walsingham, to accept a form of conditional subscription from ministers who did not seek to disturb the peace of the church. Only a few ministers, John Field among them, were actually deprived but the result of this drive for subscription was a renewed sense of urgency among the Puritan clergy for reform of the church. Field in particular relished the fight, dismissing the relaxed years of Grindal's rule as an 'unhappy tyme of loosenes and liberty' which had combined to choke 'those good thinges' which he bemoaned he was 'wonte to feel in greater measure'. 'You are wise to consider by advise', Field wrote to Edmund Chapman in Dedham, 'and by joinging together how to strengthen your handes in this worke.' Over the course of the 1580s, the work of joining together became a covert attempt to establish a 'presbytery within episcopacy'.¹⁵

Or so it was alleged when Whitgift's troubleshooter and chief detective, Richard Bancroft, in the course of searching for the authors of the Marprelate tracts, uncovered evidence that made the existence of, and correspondence between, clerical conferences in the Midlands, East Anglia and London so many classes in embryo. Bancroft's discoveries were not made until the end of the 1580s and the one meeting in Dedham, about whose existence he appears not to have known, yet whose detailed record has survived involving a dozen or more clergy meeting on eighty occasions between 1582 and 1589 can hardly be called a presbyterian classis. There is no doubt that the Dedham conference

maintained contact with John Field and other conferences, but the members of this conference repeatedly shied away from endorsing and acting upon presbyterian principles and practices. When Bartimaeus Andrewes consulted with his fellow clergy about a proposed move from the parish of Wenham to a post in Great Yarmouth, their unanimous opposition could not prevent Andrewes from going.

Whitgift made enemies at court and on the council for his severe dealings and dubious legal proceedings, but won the queen's favour. The fight was taken to the parliaments summoned in 1584 and 1586 where once again the queen intervened to quash increasingly desperate proposals for reform of the church. Failure in parliament was reinforced with the death of John Field in 1588, the same year that a new tack was tried with the publication of the first of the Martin Marprelate tracts that popularised the debates over church government by exposing the bishops as ridiculous. The success of Martin's ingenious scurrility proved disastrous as Bancroft and his pursuivants, seeking Marprelate, uncovered the evidence of presbyterianism in embryo and characterised this as a seditious plot to subvert the English church. A group of ministers, Cartwright among them, were arraigned first before ecclesiastical commissioners before being brought into the court of Star Chamber. Although the defendants were eventually released in 1592, the government made an example of executing a trio of separatists and the dominant Puritan note struck for the rest of the reign was quiescence.

Told this way, the story is primarily about conflict between conforming and nonconforming clergy and it is impossible to generalise about the Puritan clergy without injury. Some were notable comforters of troubled consciences such as Richard Greenham who established a household seminary in his parish of Dry Drayton, a stone's throw from Cambridge, and whose table talk survives. Others are known to us through the popularity and influence of their printed works: William Perkins of Cambridge, Stephen Egerton of St Anne, Blackfriars or Richard Rogers of Wethersfield whose diary is a unique record of his ministry and personality. These were names to conjure with in their day. There was John More, the celebrated preacher of St Andrews, Norwich known as the 'apostle of Norwich' who cultivated an enormously long beard and preached 'many hundred sermons or rather certaine thousandes' in Norfolk, preaching every day of the week and three or four times every Sunday. More needs to be known about how these pious and learned men related to the mass of their parishioners; and, countering the instinctively hagiographical tendency of much that has

been written about such men, it is useful to be reminded of some of the stranger features of their lives. We know that Richard Greenham, like John Whitgift, could not abide to be crossed in his admonitions and was a man so careful in the governance of his eyes that he would not look men full in the face. Such scruples led all too easily to the social exclusion practised by Richard Rogers, who refused to salute or speak with a neighbour 'of a good estate, but a carnal man'. Yet when his colleague, John Knewstub, met the same man, he greeted him 'very courteously' and conversed with him 'very affably'.¹⁶ But Elizabethan Puritanism was more than a clerical tale and concentrating over much on issues of conformity and nonconformity, episcopal and clerical reputations, debates at the universities and pamphlet wars distorts the past and overlooks the part played by the aristocracy, gentry and people.

Without the active and vital support of aristocratic patrons, it is hard to imagine how the Puritan cause might have prospered. As Patrick Collinson has argued, it was the 'greatest of all imaginable assets for the Puritans that they commanded the sympathy of so many powerful Elizabethan magnates, including the earls of Bedford and Huntingdon, and above all Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, the queen's dearest friend and perennial favourite'.¹⁷ Careful to avoid directly antagonising the queen, these magnates used their wealth and standing to protect and prefer many of the clergy who were identified by the bishops as the chief fomenters of strife. Leicester most notably gave his support to both Thomas Cartwright and John Field. Beneath this level of political and social influence were many of their clients, godly gentlemen of the shires, influential men such as Sir John Heigham, Sir Robert Jermyn or Sir Edward Lewkenor, all Leicester's men with estates in west Suffolk. Jermyn alone presented to at least ten livings in Suffolk and was a patron to John Knewstub, the leader of godly ministers in the western half of the shire. Sir Edward Lewkenor of Denham was an active parliamentarian whose surviving papers reveal the vital interest he took in ecclesiastical reform. This was the world of 'the mutually supportive alliance between magistracy and ministry' famously captured in a sermon preached by John More. Reflecting on the well-known Pauline relationship between preaching and salvation (Romans 10), he urged his audience of Norfolk justices gathered for the quarter sessions to use their authority and wealth to 'get you preachers into your parishes, . . . bestow your labour, cost and travell to get them, ride for them, runne for them, stretch your purses to maintain them, we shall begin to be riche in the Lord Jesus.' They, in turn, used their offices to protect and uphold what they called the 'towers of Zion, the painfull Pastours and ministers of

the worde'. In the early months of Whitgift's assault on nonconforming ministers, twelve of the gentlemen of Suffolk petitioned the members of the Privy Council for their ministers who had been 'indyted, arraigned and condemned' for matters of 'verie slender moment'. This was the latest round in a larger struggle between the forces of good and evil in which Orwellian doublespeak lay at the heart of the devil's scheming. In a revealing passage, the Suffolk gentlemen told Elizabeth's councillors how the adversary had 'newe christened' them with the name of 'Puritanisme', how they detested both the name and heresy and how they were those who groaned under the 'burden of our sinnes: we confesse that there be none worse before God and yet before the worlde wee labour to keepe ourselves and our profession unblameable. This is our Puritanisme.'¹⁸

Finally, there was a vital popular dimension in Puritanism in the sense that people well below the ranks of the gentry embraced the bracing biblical outlook and forms of sociability on offer, moulding and adapting them to their own ends. Perhaps particularly among the middling sort, but certainly not limited to such, men and women in London, smaller towns and the countryside actively supported the campaign for further reformation of the church, which often, but not always, began in their own parish. These men and women were activists intent on working out their salvation as they sought to reform society. They purchased, read and studied their Genevan Bibles, prayed expressively with sighs and groans, sang metrical psalms, endorsed and enforced sabbatarian observances, and supported with their presence and their pocketbooks godly sermons, the main points of which they would rehearse at home. Their biblical attachment extended to the Old Testament names they gave their children, and some parents went further and bestowed upon their unsuspecting offspring explicitly godly names such as Deliverance, Humiliation and Praise God. Some might travel miles to hear a godly sermon, gadding to sermons as it was called, or engage in days of fasting and prayer. Others signed petitions sent to the Privy Council in support of their godly preachers whose nonconformity threatened the continuance of their ministries, or, like the Dedham clothiers already met, formed covenanted communities within their parishes. Others, in their prime and at death's door, knowing themselves to be but unprofitable servants, nevertheless made generous bequests to support the 'preaching of the word'. This was never a mass movement although in some places, most notably smaller urban centres, and at certain times, the godly middling sort held sway and succeeded in achieving a form of public righteousness, the melding together of godly

magistracy and ministry. This was never without contest as churchwardens' presentments and cases in the ecclesiastical courts attest, but by the end of Elizabeth's reign towns such as Bury St Edmunds, Banbury, Colchester, Northampton, and parishes in London had established reputations as centres of godliness.

One of the more evocative places symbolising the fortunes of Elizabethan Puritanism can be found in north Wales within the ruins of Denbigh Castle. This was Leicester's territory and in this corner and in an age not known for building churches, Leicester had set about to build for the townsfolk of Denbigh the largest parish church (168 feet by 72 feet) in the realm. Begun in 1578, this would be no ordinary parish church, but a Reformed temple, or preaching hall, modelled after the churches used by the Huguenots and other foreign Protestants in London. Leicester's death in 1588 dealt a blow to the project, but with the foundation and walls in place and only the roof remaining to be built, it cannot have been clear that the project would remain still-born.¹⁹ The same might have been said of the ambitions of the godly at the end of Elizabeth's reign. True, the attempt to erect a presbyterian discipline within episcopacy had failed and some of the chief architects of this movement, John Field among them, were dead. But if Elizabethan presbyterianism had failed, this is not to say that presbyterian ideas disappeared.²⁰ Nor did the desire for discipline, understood more broadly as a reformation of manners rather than a specific form of church government. In many market towns, the latter half of Elizabeth's reign marked a flowering of the union between godly magistrates and ministers, what Samuel Ward, the celebrated preacher of Ipswich, would refer to as the two chief optic pieces. Returning to the place where this chapter began, we know very little about how the covenant entered into by Dedham's clothiers actually affected this community, although we do know that the ecclesiastical authorities struggled unsuccessfully to stem the tide of Puritan practices in Dedham and elsewhere. As the struggle for a godly ministry was played out at a local level, not all outcomes went against those who looked for further reformation and the providential matrix within which the godly operated gave plenty of scope for hope. It was probably in the autumn of 1590 when Thomas Cartwright had been placed under arrest by the ecclesiastical commissioners that his brother-in-law, Edmund Chapman, preacher of Dedham, sought to encourage him in the midst of his 'afflictions', reminding him with the prescient words 'And what know yow or we, whether all the fruites of your labors be yet risen and sprunge up, or lie still close and hidden under the ground, because of the stormy and sharpe seasons and

winterlike wether.¹²¹ Neither man lived to see better days but it was sentiments such as these that sustained the godly and sprang into action when the word arrived that the old queen had died and a new dynasty had come to the throne.

Notes

1. *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church: Dedham and Bury St Edmunds, 1582–1590*, ed. P. Collinson, J. Craig and B. Usher, Church of England Record Society, 10 (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 124–8.
2. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises, containing such Direction as is Gathered out of the Holie Scriptures* (London, 1603), Treatise 5, chapter 13.
3. Knappen saw his subject as 'A Chapter in the History of Idealism'. M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago, 1939), pp. v–xvi, 3.
4. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967).
5. See P. Collinson, 'Shepherds, sheepdogs and hirelings: the pastoral ministry in post-reformation England', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds., *Studies in Church History*, 26 (1989), 185–220. Nicholas Bacon's dictum is discussed by Patrick Collinson in 'Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Via Media', in his *Godly People* (London, 1983), pp. 135–53.
6. Rowland Taylor's remarks are found in John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1570), p. 1701; George Withers in Inner Temple Library, Petyt MS 538, fol. 320^{r-v}; the vicar of Boxted in Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 374.
7. D. MacCulloch, *The Boy King Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), pp. 165–6.
8. Thomas Wood(?), *A Brief Discours off the Troubles Begonne at Franckford* (London, 1575).
9. See B. Usher, 'The Deanery of Bocking and the demise of the Vestiarian Controversy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (2001), 434–55.
10. Edward Dering, *A Sermon preached before the Queenes Maiestie the 25 day of Februarie . . . 1569* (London, 1570).
11. It is significant that 'not' was amended to 'scarse' in the second edition and all surviving copies of the first edition have been altered by hand. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 120, note 24.
12. *An Admonition to the Parliament* (London, 1572), passim.
13. Robert Browne, *Treatise of Reformation without Tarying for Anie* (Middelburg, 1582).
14. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 195–6.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 254; *Conferences and Combination Lectures*, ed. Collinson, Craig and Usher, pp. 89–90.
16. For Greenham, see 'Practical Divinity': *The Works and Life of Revd Richard Greenham*, ed. K. L. Parker and E. Carlson (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 174, 182–3. For Rogers and Knewstub, see Giles Firmin, *The Real Christian* (London, 1670), pp. 67–8.

17. P. Collinson, *English Puritanism* (London, 1983), p. 27.
18. John More, *Three Godly and Fruitful Sermons* (Cambridge, 1594), pp. 66–9; *A Parte of a Register*, (Middelburg, 1593(?)), pp. 128–30.
19. L. Butler, 'Leicester's church, Denbigh: an experiment in Puritan worship', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser., 37 (1974), 40–62.
20. I am grateful to Dr Polly Ha for allowing me to read her dissertation, 'English Presbyterianism c. 1590–1640' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2006).
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3 Early Stuart Puritanism

TOM WEBSTER

To provide an account of early Stuart Puritanism is, in a sense, to attempt an objective description of a chimera. To look for a creature with a consistent essence, a teleology and an ever-present set of characteristics is counterproductive in that it takes as given exactly that which must be addressed, it assumes what should be at the heart of the question, namely whether, between 1603 and 1640, there was something with sufficiently constant attributes to deserve the unifying term of 'early Stuart Puritanism'. Something like a teleology, or at least a narrative, will be set out, but in order for its status as a meta-narrative to be engaged with as a way of making explicit the issues of contingency and the contextually dependent nature of the identity of the beast.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF THE NEW REIGN

The start of the new regime found Puritanism as ambivalent. On the one hand, one result of the Marprelate controversy, the furore over sensationalists like Francis Hacket, the relations with separatists, the legal and literary exchange over the efforts of John Darrell *et al.* to heal the possessed and the Whitgiftian drive for conformity, was to create multiple responses from Puritans, some seeking distance from disreputable means, others willing to defend their causes.¹ On the other hand, the arrival of a monarch seen as sympathetic to 'reformed' Protestantism encouraged many to bide their time in the hope of a supreme governor closer to their mindset.² This tension can be seen to run through individuals as the parodic epitaph attached to Archbishop Whitgift's hearse shows: the investigation revealed connections from more peripheral opponents to ministers fostering reform from within the royal court.³ This tension between appropriation and subversion will be a recurring theme.

It is this more optimistic outlook that holds the attention immediately after the succession of James VI to the thrones of England

and Ireland. A number of petitions asking for reform across the spectrum from liturgy and practice to government were pressed upon the new king, in themselves evidence of continuing contacts and organisation. The most famous was the Millenary Petition, supposedly signed by a thousand ministers, asking for improved worship and discipline, citing scriptural models. The short-term result was the Hampton Court Conference with four Puritan 'representatives', Edward Reynolds, Thomas Sparke, Laurence Chaderton and John Knewstub chosen by the Privy Council. The agenda was set by the establishment with plenty of ministers on the edge, hoping to take the discussion in more radical directions. The spokesmen for the godly could be said to have been held in an impractical position. Presenting themselves as 'moderate', their calls for reform could be dismissed as petty and insignificant and James leapt upon the opportunity to categorise any desire for ecclesiological change as verging on treason. The critical consequence of the conference was less the business discussed than its representation; one of the lessons of the previous fifteen years had been an awareness of the importance of public perception. Accordingly, the predominant record of the event showed the king as willing to listen, to take some action but unwilling to bend to 'unreasonable' demands. This provided a model of distinction between 'moderates' to be tolerated, and 'radicals', inherently dangerous subversives ruling themselves out of any debates for change in religious policy.⁴

Between 1604 and 1606 this model was applied throughout the kingdom. The articles of 1583 were brought to the king's attention at the conference and the bishops were required to impose subscription to the articles upon the clergy. This declaration, rather than constant ceremonial conformity, was the criterion for acceptance within the church. Despite the serious reservations of many to such an expression of approval for the liturgy, the imposition was performed more by persuasion than coercion, giving ministers time to mull over the options of co-operation or discipline. By 1609 about eighty ministers had been deprived for non-subscription.⁵ The attention of the godly laity was predominantly on the defensive, finding places or financial support for the deprived, campaigning for reinstatement or attempting, in parliament, to limit subscription to doctrine rather than include liturgical practice.⁶

On one level, this can be seen as accepting the changed discourse of the Jacobean regime. The early activism and subsequent disappointment has been seen as the late flowering of the Elizabethan Puritan movement. It could be argued that this is captured in the fortunes of William Bradshaw. As a rising star, a protégé of Chaderton and

Cartwright and close to Arthur Hildersham, he struck out against the 'moderates' at Hampton Court in his *English Puritanisme* (1605), setting out his objections to conformity and giving the skeleton of a semi-detached ecclesiology, between presbyterianism and separation. Until his death in 1618 he held the relatively marginal place of chaplain to a gentry family in Derbyshire. Similarly, Paul Baynes and William Ames, two prominent figures, were marginalised in the public sphere, the former losing his place as William Perkins's successor at Cambridge, the latter forced into exile in the Netherlands.⁷

From the perspective of high politics, the central phase of James VI & I's reign seems to have been successful in associating 'radical' Puritans with subversion and thereby disempowering them. The political efforts at structural and ceremonial reform, while not wholly absent, were certainly muted. There was nothing to compare with the Directory or the *Admonition*, the vestiarian crisis or the disputes of Cartwright and Whitgift. It could be argued that the godly retired to their homes and stepped out of the public sphere to lick their wounds; this is an issue to which we will return.

This sense of domesticated Puritanism came to be strained in the changing context of the late 1610s. After finding themselves in step with the establishment at the Synod of Dort in 1618, the godly were less so after the outbreak of hostilities which were to become the Thirty Years' War. This was seen as an apocalyptic war between Catholics and Protestants and consequently the efforts of James to reach a diplomatic solution through a marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta were unacceptable. While it should be recognised that some of the criticism came from figures close to the primate, the most vociferous protest from contributors such as Thomas Scott and Alexander Leighton re-activated the connection between Puritanism and subversion. James responded with proclamations and discipline, most famously with the Declaration for Preachers in 1622 which forbade preachers from dealing with matters of state.⁸

These were circumstances which favoured a shift in the balance of power, in the rhetoric of religious policy and, gradually, in the imposition of policy itself. The first explicit sign of this shift was the publication of Richard Montagu's *A New Gag for an Old Goose* (1624). While nominally an anti-Catholic tract, this work minimised the differences between the Church of England and Rome, treating Puritanism and doctrinal Calvinism as virtual synonyms. Part of this registered a shift in the grounds of debate, from practicalities of worship to soteriological issues, moving towards Arminianism as orthodoxy. Initial reactions

brought Montagu under parliamentary investigation in 1624. This was the result of a petition delivered by Nathaniel Ward and John Yates but their intentions were closely allied to the circle of Archbishop Abbot. Indeed parliament referred the matter back to the primate.⁹

After the accession of Charles I in 1625 the controversy came to a head when two of the most prominent noble professors, the earl of Warwick and Viscount Saye and Sele brought the duke of Buckingham, the royal favourite, to hold a conference at York House in February 1626. This should not be seen as a 'Puritans vs. Anglicans' summit so much as 'Calvinists vs. anti-Calvinists'. The former were represented by Bishop Thomas Morton and John Preston, the head of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and a central figure linking London, academia, ministers and the godly gentry, the latter by Montagu and Dean Francis White. While the theological debate was inconclusive, the lines of division were clearly drawn. The most important signal was a shift in patronage: Preston had been Buckingham's client but the favourite's loyalties were shown to have moved into Montagu's camp.¹⁰

At this point, and almost certainly related to this shift, came a hardening of lines and an invigoration of Puritan activism both in London and in the provinces. Part of this is reflected in communal piety, in conferences and patronage and in specifically evangelical charitable projects, both at home and abroad. This can be seen in the stepping up of efforts to provide or sustain godly ministers in the formalisation of the Feoffees for Impropriation. In 1626 twelve Londoners, clerical and lay, brought together the means and networks intended to provide and finance preachers, predominantly as lecturers rather than beneficed ministers, in urban pulpits across the country. In hand with this, there was a stronger campaign to train ministers in household seminaries, completing the work of Oxbridge colleges in the more comfortable and secure environs of ministerial families.¹¹ We will return to these and similar projects below; for now it seems worth stepping back to give an appraisal of what we have got so far.

PAROCHIAL AND INDIVIDUAL REFORMATION

From the high-political vantage point, the main impressions are of failure, frustration and efforts to maintain influence in changing circumstances. Above all, this comes across as a farrago of small-scale efforts at reform and reactive strategies that pales in comparison with their Elizabethan forebears. While there is some truth in this, it is also consequent upon two factors that must be taken into account. The first

is the relatively consensual nature of the church under Archbishop Abbot. Differences between the establishment and 'moderate' Puritans were more a matter of emphasis than fundament. Related to this is the fact that high politics encourages a reading more sensitive to conflict than cooperation, argument than appropriation. If we turn our attention to broader issues of practice and proselytisation a more complicated picture can be constructed.

Some elements of what follows will be engaged with in greater detail elsewhere in this volume so this section should by no means be seen to be comprehensive. It is very much turned to the purpose of delineating an activism, a lifestyle, that shows something of greater substance than the impression given so far. It is a matter of particular instances adding up to more than the sum of their parts. It should be recognised that there are continuities with earlier issues of patronage and piety but differences too, both in practice and in perception. The first area is one with the greatest continuity, that of patronage. While the loss of figures like the earl of Leicester and the cataclysm of his replacement by the earl of Essex was a serious blow, it did not bring an end to the efforts of noble professors to bring Reformed Protestantism to the parishes. There were veterans like Sir Anthony Cope providing pulpits for preachers like John Dod in Warwickshire and the new generation of the Rich, Barrington and Barnardiston families in East Anglia as well as more isolated patrons like Sir Robert Harley establishing Puritan ministers in north-west Herefordshire. Patronage goes beyond the individual, particularly for urban churches, with more collective or corporate backing establishing Samuel Ward as town preacher in Ipswich from 1603 to his suspension in the mid-1630s, keeping Northampton as a godly bastion in a less than Puritan diocese and keeping a tense relationship between town and cathedral in Norwich.¹²

Personnel was provided for the parishes through the universities with some colleges almost specialising in the provision of godly ministers and magistrates, most famously Emmanuel College, Cambridge (under Laurence Chaderton and then John Preston) inheriting the place of Christ's College. The transitional period of time in household seminaries before taking on a parish became a more frequent part of a minister's career, partly a luxury as numbers rose and partly a necessity as discipline tightened at the universities. Clearly these aspects were important in providing the people for the most visible parts of Puritanism; what is more important is that they were both symptomatic and constitutive of a collective identity.¹³ This sense becomes clearer if we turn to piety and practice at the parish level.

Beginning with piety, there was a productive tension between individual and group within Puritan devotion. The vigorous practices of discipline, the self-examination and prayer can be seen as a solitary activity, dependent upon a close relationship between devotee and deity. The flipside of this was a need for support, both institutional and voluntary. At an institutional level this can be seen as an appropriation of the rhetoric of moderation. Accepting a conscionable silence on matters like church government and conformity in their preaching and writing, it became possible for ministers to promote practical divinity, to foster true devotion and doctrine and to encourage the acceptance of godly parameters and priorities in the lives of their parishioners. The Jacobean church could accept silent adoption of practices of worship that strayed from the liturgy providing these were undertaken without explicit exposition of the reasons for the nonconformity. On both sides this was a matter of negotiation, with tolerance dependent upon a willingness to emphasise socially acceptable calls for reform and, on the other hand, the adoption of the rhetoric of obedience and order depended upon the maintenance of common ground between the godly and the ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁴

This is the area where the terminology is most delicate. The self-image of the godly was a matter of loyal, reforming piety, simply taking the required practice to a higher level of commitment, adding to but not subverting the status quo. This is the most affirmative understanding of the voluntary religion taken on alongside legal expectations. This is the familiar social round of gadding to sermons, conferences after services to drive home the preacher's message, the fasting and prayer, the spiritual household and the support for more individual self-examination. This presentation was not, as we shall see, entirely honest as an innocent fervour merely displaying extra enthusiasm. Indeed, in the most peaceful circumstances, it expressed a *contingent* approval of the established church, drawing upon the lectures and household chaplains implicitly indicating the insufficiencies of the established church. The line between addition and alternative was mutable, in both observation and perception. What is central here is the ambiguity of 'voluntary': it can mean simply taken on in addition to the norm but it also indicates a choice, presumably a good choice and one that is available to everyone but not taken by everyone, in itself a criticism and a source of identity by difference.¹⁵

The disruptive potential is seen at its most persistent in the desire to improve society. While one side of the piety was introspective and inward, it went along with a mission to improve humility and morality

in the public sphere. Efforts at the 'reformation of manners' could be very broad, ranging from limiting church ales, mixed dancing, swearing, vagrancy or adultery to pre-marital sex or infringements of sabbatarianism. It should be stressed, of course, that involvement in limiting such activities did not *necessarily* designate one as a Puritan; this was more a question of intention than the activity per se. For our purposes, there are two points that need emphasising. The first is that this was the outward reflection of spiritual probity: by attempting to change, by denouncing, the recalcitrant, one was defining oneself as not 'one of them'. The second is that this could be judgemental and confrontational: it could be a magistrate enforcing the law with particular zeal, a minister willing to add names to general moral guidance from the pulpit or lay people distancing themselves from the ungodly, passively by not participating in 'ungodly' activities or actively by denouncing them. Each choice, to a differing degree, could provoke dissatisfaction, alienation and, most importantly, divisive identification along lines of good or bad, fanatical or reasonable, depending on where one stood.

The discourses of religion and reform were both maintained and reflected in the world of print. The ambiguities and potential subversion were to be emphasised in the 1630s but it is important to be aware of the consensus and appropriation that preceded this and characterised the vast majority of religious print. Our attention tends to be drawn to the more combative literature but that should not be at the expense of practical and devotional publications that dominated the works of booksellers. The market could be provided for across the spectrum with smaller catechisms, sensationalist providentialist pamphlets, compilations of the 'highlights' of devotional literature on to single sermons or more substantial collections of works, detailed expositions of scripture as well as, of course, scripture itself. The time and money spent preparing posthumous prints of the practical divinity of renowned ministers such as William Perkins, Richard Sibbes, Richard Greenham and John Preston show the value accorded to the availability of these works. While such works had the intention of changing people, society and social practice they were not inherently polemical, for much of this period being more accurately described as a demanding, 'improving' part of the mainstream of the Church of England. This is less a reflection of draconian state censorship than of common ground, a well-established practice of peer appraisal and an intention to reform the church from within.¹⁶ That much said, we should not focus solely on the respectable part of the spectrum at the expense of the culture of derision and libel from the graffiti, posted verse, circulated manuscripts

and broadsides handing out abuse, providing critiques and calling for change.¹⁷

REACTIONS TO LAUDIANISM

To take the York House Conference and its aftermath as a point at which to step back and assess may be seen as portraying the event as a crucial turning point, a decisive exchange, at worst to finish the prelude to what would now be a (fairly poor) causes-of-the-wars-of-religion study. Fortunately, for readers and writers alike, it is not that simple. The changes in terms of policies, regimes, personnel and personalities took a lot longer to gain control, to have implementation and impact, with considerable variation geographically. An unofficial conference, however widely reported, does not constitute a critical statement of direction and should be read as a sign of changes in the air rather than a tectonic movement. Indeed, given the political circumstances, particularly with regard to foreign policy and the crown's need for subsidies, it is remarkable that King Charles stayed true to his religious inclinations in the late 1620s. Between 1625 and 1629 parliament acted as a forum for complaints primarily on doctrinal issues, linked with the demands and failures of the war, a mixture of dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of military performance and with the means of finance. This led to the association of a perceived Catholic and Arminian subversion of the church with innovation in government. This also provided the background for a rhetoric attaching Puritanism to subversion and disorder, particularly after John Felton assassinated the duke of Buckingham in 1628 with claims of religious justification. The development of two mutually exclusive perceptions of threats to the church and established forms of governance, on the one hand, and to order and authority on the other, can be seen at the end of the parliament of 1629. The House of Commons asked for Protestantism to be defined according to the Lambeth Articles, the decidedly Calvinist Irish Articles of 1615 and the conclusions of the Synod of Dort. Parliament was dissolved within a week with mutual distrust and incomprehension.¹⁸

Through these years the focus of power at the centre shifted crucially. With Archbishop Abbot effectively disempowered, the central figures around King Charles, guiding and implementing his policies, consisted of a group of avant-garde sacerdotalists, initially people like Richard Neile, Matthew Wren and, increasingly, William Laud. As they gradually accumulated more power, the orthodoxies of doctrine and, particularly, practice moved away from the relatively consensual

Calvinism and limited silent nonconformity of Abbot's rule. As Laud became more central, it is more appropriate to refer to this as Laudianism for two reasons. The first is that 'anti-Calvinism' or 'Arminian' keeps the differences too tightly focused on doctrine and risks taking as a given a less than clearly evident doctrinal homogeneity among its supporters. Secondly, the breadth of the personalised 'Laudianism' takes in the matters of liturgy, furniture, discipline and fears which were shared, to varying degrees, by those together within the network of sympathisers to the new priorities.

The policies of the 1630s, particularly after Laud was chosen as archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, could have been written as an effective list to alienate, shock and anger Puritans and to thoroughly disturb the tense cooperation of the middle of James's reign. While there were regional variations, depending on personalities and context, it is worthwhile to begin with a broad-brush approach. For the use of the liturgy, the Laudian desire was for order and uniformity. The Book of Common Prayer was to be employed without addition or omission with the clergy always wearing the stipulated vestments. The laity was required to stand for the creed and the gospels and was to bow at the name of Jesus. Much of this, it was made clear, was merely returning to and reviving older requisites, but this is to ignore a generation for whom these practices were optional, at worst an occasional requirement to show willing.

This was not the case with the most controversial of the innovations. From the early 1630s, parishes were ordered to follow the style of cathedrals and place the communion table against the east wall of the chancel, 'altar-wise', surround it with railings and to give the communion to the laity who knelt at the rails.¹⁹ This shift from a Lord's Supper modelled upon the Last Supper with the emphasis drawing on the spiritual advantages from the familiarity of the surroundings and the elements of the sacrament as ways to meditate upon the sacrifice of Christ, was seen as far too much of a move towards the Roman Catholic Mass.

The sharpness of the offences was heightened by the relative efficiency of enforcement. As early as June 1626 Charles issued a proclamation to close controversial preaching or writing on predestination and a similar Declaration of November 1628 condemned such contentious preaching. While neither of these can be seen as promotion of anti-Calvinism, in the right hands they could be used as tools to mute an item central to experiential Calvinism. While Charles intended the latter to be observed by both sides, the increasingly clear direction of his favoured appointments to bishoprics made any hopes for a more level playing field forlorn.²⁰

The impact of the shifted priorities was unignorable regarding parochial worship. In the 1630s visitations were much more rigorous in their surveillance of practice, with networks of 'informers' extending the watchful eye of bishops and their officials, with ministers required to perform complete conformity in front of the visitors and visitation sermons proclaiming the expectations of the hierarchy. Short-term expediciencies that had been successful in helping ministers to avoid confrontations were now less effective as questions and practices that had been ducked were now pursued after the visitation, creating a much clearer choice between conformity and defiance. This was perhaps clearest in terms of the altar policy with the physical changes providing a material measure of compliance.²¹

The profitable ambiguities of voluntary religion were also severely tested by the new regime. The fasts and conferences, a central element of the Puritan spirituality, became perceived as more likely to be subversive than merely additional. Catechising sessions were encouraged, far from alien to the godly in themselves, but more of an affront when they were employed as a more controllable practice at the expense of sermons. This element came to a height in 1633 with the renewal of the Book of Sports, a limitation of sabbatarianism and, in contrast to its Jacobean manifestation, one which ministers were required to read to their congregations, removing the get-out clause of turning a blind eye. Alongside this came a distrust of the semi-detached lectures. Part of the attraction of the post to Puritans was that it focused on the sermon; when lecturers were required to observe the full liturgy as part of the service, the option of silent toleration for nonconformity was lessened.

While the fortunes of Puritan ministers and laity were widely reported and, as we shall see, discussed at length, there were a few occasions which marked with particular clarity the changed circumstances of the 1630s. The first is the fate of the Feoffees for Improvements, in itself the heir to less formal efforts to widen the availability of godly preaching. In 1633 the Feoffees were taken through the courts, portrayed as an insidious attempt to subvert the order of the church and foster disobedience among the urban laity. While the self-image of a godly cause simply intended to supplement the availability of the Word alongside the Church of England is not the whole story, the judgement, requiring the Feoffees to restore the impropriations to the incumbents and to cease meeting, was seen as a blow to the laudable task of preaching, as a sign of a church which gave little value to the Word of God in the pulpit.²²

The impact of the suppression of the Feoffees almost pales in comparison to the trial and conviction of the most famous triumvirate of the 1630s. In 1637, William Prynne, an established thorn in the side of the authorities, John Bastwick, a medical doctor, and Henry Burton, a vociferous minister, once of Prince Henry's and then Prince Charles's retinue but now at odds with the establishment, were called before the Star Chamber as a result of their publications. They were guilty, it is true, of printing serious criticisms of the state of the church, its doctrine and practice and the conduct of the authorities, but it was their respectability more than any radicalism which made their punishment particularly irksome. As a doctor, a lawyer and a minister, they could be seen as a trinity of authority. All three were to have their ears cut off (Prynne for the second time!) and Prynne was to be branded with 'S.L.' on his cheeks to mark him as a 'seditious libeller'. The distance between the godly and the authorities is shown by 'S.L.' being taken as an acronym for 'stigmata Laudis' and by the way they were treated as martyrs in the Foxeian tradition upon their eventual release.²³

The response of Puritans to these priorities and actions was more multifarious than immediately appears. The first, and most dramatic options are quickest to gain the attention and should certainly not be ignored. Called upon to employ forms of worship that stuck with the conscience, there were ministers and lay people willing to embrace the challenge as a trial and to refuse to compromise, to denounce this popery in the pulpit or, more rarely, the press. For many ministers this meant suffering deprivation or losing the licence to preach, a serious vocational assault but a martyrdom that was to be bravely suffered rather than cowered from. Along with this went the option of flight, initially to the Netherlands, then to New England and, later in the decade, to the Netherlands again. Very often for ministers flight followed deprivation, with about two-thirds of around eighty ministers having been disciplined before their departure. While the motives of the laity were not solely religious, escape from persecution and the promise of 'pure' worship was important and the numbers of migrants from East Anglia, the West Riding of Yorkshire and the dioceses of London and Chester, each of which enjoyed the pleasures of a Laudian incumbent, keeps religion as a prime motivational source.²⁴

Without dismissing the importance of these responses, it should also be noted the responses were not so clear cut as this suggests. One of the questions discussed among the Puritans was whether it was better to try to weather the storm, if possible, to keep one's pulpit to offer comfort and support to the godly laity. The 1630s saw a growth in casuistical

attempts to maintain godly preaching or at least writing and pastoral duties even if this meant flying close to the wind of compromise with the ecclesiastical authorities. Delaying tactics could be adopted during visitations, gestures towards conformity intended to meet the demands of diocesan officials without giving any value to ceremonial practices in themselves, and the devoted observation of saints' days not because they were laudable in themselves but because they provided opportunities to preach beyond the single service on the Sabbath. Similarly, there were tensions within the godly community about emigration. While the vision of the scriptural 'city on a hill' was an established part of Puritan rhetoric long before New England, some saw the option as suitable for the less staunch 'young Peter', less so for the more mature, more resolute 'old Peter'.²⁵

Part of the encouragement to stay in England and, for ministers, to stay even with the threat of deprivation, was the established tactics of living with a church in a semi-detached manner. The maintenance of activism through voluntary religion, through posts as household chaplain, even as ministers unable to conduct services but still residing in their parishes, had long been a part of the culture of Puritanism. The rigours of Laudianism could never be sufficient to prevent Puritans from making some impact albeit from the interstices of church and society. This should not be over-dramatised. On one level, it can be seen in the operation of networks of patronage coping with the impact of Laudianism, maintaining the provision of preaching in the face of discipline, with ministers like Simeon Ashe keeping his public voice after his expulsion over the Book of Sports, in the shelter of a post as Lord Brooke's chaplain. Similarly, Daniel Rogers, lecturer at Wethersfield, was silenced but stayed, devoting his time to writing, to providing visiting preachers, fulfilling his pastoral duties to parishioners and colleagues and keeping a place among the established noble professors of Essex, contributing to fasts and conferences despite his relative marginalisation. Laudianism lacked the time, and perhaps the opportunity, to remove the connections that sustained the presence of voluntary religion within cities, towns and provinces.²⁶ On a lower level, the records of the fortunes of individuals like Robert Woodford and Nehemiah Wallington give us access to two things. The first is that it was possible to continue gadding to sermons, to take part in conferences and, of course, to practice the solitary discipline of reading, self-examination and diary-keeping, the bones of Puritan spirituality. Along with this went an increased alienation with the potential for radicalisation and a greater sense of siege mentality to which we shall return.²⁷

On a more practical level, we can see the intellectual and spiritual networks of merchants, nobles and preachers contributing to the defence of Reformed Protestantism. This can be seen in efforts to raise money and spiritual support for the Palatinate. It is also there in support offered to John Dury's efforts to compile a body of divinity to emphasise the common ground of different strains of Protestantism in the face of the Thirty Years' War. The ministers willing to support his efforts and the laity prepared to contribute financially read like a roll call of the godly, particularly in the south-east. While they shared his intentions, they were also encouraged by the prospect of marginalising Arminianism as well as of providing a more positive role for deprived ministers. Such a broad concern to fund and aid the publication of literature both devotional and more polemical can be found in the papers of Samuel Hartlib from the early 1630s in an agreement showing links, organisational and financial, joining ministers like John Davenport, Francis Higginson and John Stoughton, gentle veterans like Sir Richard Knightley and men with connections to the earl of Warwick and Viscount Saye and Sele. This brought links with the networks and the parishes involved in raising money for refugee ministers from the Palatinate and in the Feoffees for Improvements.²⁸

These strands of contacts and activity bring us to the much-vaunted 'radicalisation' of Puritanism in the 1630s. We tend to be most drawn to the public dimensions like the works of Prynne *et al.* or to the connections made with Scots disenchanted with their own experience of Caroline religious policy, and these should certainly not be discounted. It is equally useful to pay attention to less dramatic developments. One issue, discussed at greater length elsewhere, will only be touched upon here. That is the revival, resurrection or, as I would prefer, the flowering of latent alternative ecclesiologies in this period. Two changes made this less tolerable framework for a model of churches based upon the two marks of right doctrine and proper administration of the sacraments; it became harder to accept the thesis that sufficient reform could be achieved with bishops like Matthew Wren or Richard Neile. Secondly, the instances of practice gradually expanded with the models adopted in Massachusetts or Connecticut being measured against the troubled experience of the Netherlands, with grander claims from the security of New England concerning the more strained stances in England, necessarily a position requiring negotiation.²⁹

A rather more experiential radicalisation was to be undergone within the voluntary devotions of Puritans in England. As the porous boundaries between the public worship and voluntary religion became

more sharply drawn, partly in perception and partly in reality, the conferences and the fasts, both solitary and communal, could become more confrontational. We can find Samuel Rogers praying for the 'conversion' of King Charles, the clergy of Essex holding a fast to plea for divine assistance against Samuel Harsnett's threatened changes after his elevation to the northern archdiocese. In 1633 and 1634, Sir Robert Harley held fasts asking for the protection of harassed ministers, for the Feoffees, for Protestants across Europe, for parliament, for the universities and for the suppression of popery and Arminianism at home.³⁰ Such harsh lines and such a clear sense of attack, both offered and received, were at once a cause and consequence of changing identity. The very act of private fasts heightened the sense of threat, of siege, and the broadening and the definition of 'Puritan' within official rhetoric encouraged some to accept the term; if someone regarded as an instrument of Satan working against 'good' causes called one a Puritan then the term almost became a compliment in defining one as not 'one of them'.³¹ This could recruit more ambivalent 'prayer book Protestants' and provide the established godly with an opportunity to turn the abuse against its source.

This changing, broadening, embracing and embraced question of identity brings to the fore an issue that has been implicit in much of the preceding. This is whether it is possible, accurate or even counter-productive to talk about an early Stuart Puritan movement.³² It is not enough to 'prove' that there were people referred to as 'Puritans' through the years between 1603 and 1640. Neither would it be profitable to use the sole criterion of the model of the textbook simplification of the Collinsonian 'Elizabethan Puritan Movement', at worst an effort to apply the cachet of an abstracted, depersonalised 'force', the quasi-glamour of respectable troublemakers. The first point to make is that the earlier incarnation was, and has become recognised as, more fragmented and more heterogeneous than we tend to assume. This may encourage us to consider a more fluid understanding of 'a movement'. If we look for a collection of reformist demands and efforts as a combination of relatively unchanging priorities, it can be found in the piety, the supportive sociability and the intended proselytisation and social intervention consequent upon that piety. This sits alongside the contingent, conditional loyalties to crown and commonwealth dependent upon their relationship with the parameters of godliness. The visibility of the confrontational stereotype of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy will differ according to context as well as according to his power to have an impact. It is best to use the model of a set of tensions, both change and

consistency, the nostalgia for former glories and prophecy of improvement perhaps best instanced in the Jeremiad, and the relationship between elite and popular seen not as a model imposed from above but as a dialectic, a negotiation and an appropriation. This is not a matter of looking for continuity in the form of a focused, almost inevitable movement; instead, we should be thinking in terms of changing tensions in relation to both internal and external factors and, perhaps especially, marginal, peripheral pressures. Some of this can be seen in the various border wars within what is too easily understood as a homogeneous, uncontested 'Calvinist consensus'. At its most successful this could consist of circulated manuscripts, position papers and negotiations between theology and pastoral needs, sensitised by tensions from the impact of the controversies in the Netherlands, by the impact of Montagu or by the governmental declarations. We know most of these negotiations from their re-emergence in the new context of the 1640s.³³ When unsuccessful it resulted in more public admonitions, accusations and counter-accusations fostering the rhetoric of Laudianism in the 1630s, with conflicts made less manageable with the absence of an establishment willing to help police the boundaries.³⁴ What tends to be less appreciated is that any tradition, any consensus, requires maintenance, and in this the godly community was much more of a success than a failure.

The lesson of the Puritan depending upon the eye of the beholder has been salutary. We should go further with it and recognise its internal application as well as its more hostile manifestation. The 'Puritan' is indeed context-dependent, friable and necessarily mutable. The flipside of this is that Puritans, so defined, could take on the model for themselves and also recognise their like-minded kindred spirits, such recognition always dependent upon continual observation of the criteria for godliness. That this community was maintained through the changing contexts of these forty years, particularly when placed next to the fission of the 1640s, in part measured by the pursuit of goals however unattained, perhaps unattainable, deserves the sense of ambition required by the nomenclature of 'a movement'.

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 20. Fincham and Lake, 'Ecclesiastical policies', pp. 39–40.
 21. Webster, *Godly Clergy*, pp. 167–214, 235–54.
 22. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–6.
 23. S. Foster, *Notes from the Caroline Underground: Alexander Leighton, the Puritan Triumvirate and the Laudian Reaction to Nonconformity* (Hamden, CT, 1978).
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29. Webster, *Godly Clergy*, pp. 286-319.
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31. See D. Brautigam, 'Prelates and politics: uses of "Puritan", 1625-1640', in L. L. Knoppers, ed., *Puritanism and its Discontents* (London, 2003), esp. pp. 57-62; cf. Cressy, *England on Edge*, pp. 141-3; P. Lake, '"A charitable Christian hatred": the godly and their enemies in the 1630s', in Durston and Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism*, pp. 145-83.
32. This argument is partly consequent upon the points made in Peter Lake, 'Order, orthodoxy and resistance: the ambiguous legacy of English Puritanism, or just how moderate was Stephen Denison?', in M. J. Braddick and J. Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 206-9. It might be worth making clear that the phrase in the title of my *Godly Clergy* was not my choice and in defence of its adoption I can only plead the humility of an apprentice simply pleased to see his thesis published. The term appears only twice in the text (pp. 4, 338), initially as a question and later as an assertion hedged around with serious caveats.
33. Como, 'Puritans, predestination'; cf. Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 56-7.
34. In different ways this is a recurring theme in D. Como, 'Predestination and political conflict in Laud's London', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 263-94; Como and P. Lake, 'Puritans, Antinomians and Laudians in Caroline London: the strange case of Peter Shaw and its contexts', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 684-715; Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001); Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004); Lake and Como, '"Orthodoxy and its discontents": dispute settlement and the production of "consensus" in the London (Puritan) underground', *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), 34-70.

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4 The Puritan Revolution

JOHN MORRILL

INTRODUCTION

The crisis that overwhelmed Britain and Ireland in the mid seventeenth century has no agreed title: the English Revolution, the Great Rebellion, the Civil Wars and Interregnum, England's (or Britain's) War(s) of Religion, the War(s) of the Three Kingdoms, the Puritan Revolution. The last had a limited shelf life – coined by S. R. Gardiner in 1876¹ and used in the title of his influential collection of *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625–1660* (1889) but not in his great multi-volume history of the period.² It was promoted hard by American historians (especially literary historians)³ between the 1930s and the 1960s and then abandoned. It is certainly not how any Puritan at the time described what they were living through. It has existed to describe a process but not its outcome.

The case for calling the crisis a Puritan Revolution is strongest in relation to the struggle to 'reform the reformation' in the period 1640–6, and – quite separately – to describe the 'teeming liberty' of the years 1646–53, when ecclesial discipline broke down and hundreds of 'gathered churches' formed in towns and villages outside the parish system, some defining themselves doctrinally (the Particular and General Baptists, the Fifth Monarchists) and others by their charismatic leaders (the Muggletonians). When Oliver Cromwell became head of state in December 1653, some stability was achieved, with a state church that grew out of Puritan experience and evangelistic zeal, but with a broad measure of liberty for those who did not seek to disturb the peace of others. But there was still plenty of contention and recrimination (with the Quakers at the centre of the maelstrom).

Throughout the period, the word 'liberty' appears in the titles of hundreds of tracts, far more often being used in a religious than in a secular sense, but when it is so used, it is usually by clergy to justify the dismantling of the discredited 'Anglican' forms of government, discipline

and worship; and after 1645 by laymen to justify freedom outside the church that the Long Parliament and its clerical advisers were seeking to put in its place; or to put it another way, the period 1640–6 was dominated by Presbyterian assaults on Anglicanism, 1646–53 by Independent assaults on Presbyterianism, and 1653–60 by sectarian assaults on congregationalism and central tenets of Calvinism.

REFORMING THE REFORMATION, 1640–6

When the Long Parliament met in November 1640, Laudianism had few friends. But it is too easy to see the cacophony of angry voices railing against it as being predominantly Puritan voices. Protest centred around three things: sacramentalism, clericalism and bureaucratic centralism, and only the first was a predominantly ‘godly’ concern. Laud had insisted not only that all ministers observe the words of the rubric, he sought to limit worship to what was in the prayer book. Other forms of worship were proscribed; and his altar policy served his dictum that the altar was ‘the greatest place of God’s residence here on earth, greater than the pulpit’ for on the altar we found the body of Christ but in the pulpit *at most* (his phrase) the word of Christ.⁴ There was a godly outrage and the reversal of all this and the punishment of those responsible was a top priority in 1640–1.

Laud’s affirmative action programme to restore some of the wealth plundered from the church in the 1630s, and to regain the jurisdiction of the church – he even threatened to excommunicate judges who transferred cases from the church courts to the common law courts – along with his placing of clergy in high offices of state, on the Privy Council and in local commissions of the peace dismayed Puritans who believed in a strict separation of church and state, but it also inflamed a much wider erastianism amongst the laity. Particularly disturbing was their knowledge that in Scotland and Ireland, Charles and Laud had forced the heirs of those who had acquired former monastic lands to pay heavily for confirmation of their titles specifically to shore up church revenues. ‘I will have no priest have any necessity of a lay dependency’, wrote Laud.⁵ It was not only Puritans who begged to differ.

Laud insisted it was bishops, not parish elites, who should decide on matters of church furnishing. Bishops ordered a doubling of church rates to restore ‘the beauty of holiness’ to parish fixtures and fittings; they ordered ostentatious pews to be removed, they granted permission over the heads of protestors for church ales (boisterous parish fund-raisers) to

be held.⁶ Furthermore he insisted that 'the calling of Bishops was *iure divino*' and that lay elders were never heard of until they became 'a new fangled device at Geneva'.⁷ Once more, this enraged more people than just the godly.

In 1640–2 there was a grand coalition against Laudianism and it took years to break up into its component parts. Most MPs arrived at Westminster with their own horror stories of clerical arrogance and of innovations that undermined the protestant identity of the church. At any point a simple poll would have revealed that most envisaged the retention of a chastened bench of bishops with reduced powers together with strong parliamentary action to promote true religion and a reformation of manners and a heightened emphasis on free and frequent preaching in churches that were more than ever whitewashed auditoria. Hundreds of petitions from parishes poured in telling tales of clerical excess and of laymen humiliated,⁸ and as MPs listened to preachers at the monthly days of fasting setting the issues in a providentialist and apocalyptic context of God's wrath and Christ's imminent Second Coming,⁹ many more MPs became convinced that there could be no going back to the church before Laud. A system of government so easily taken over and used for corrupt ends was a system that had to be changed. A campaign was launched to abolish the existing system of government 'roots and branches'¹⁰ and to set up a synod to search out from Holy Scripture those elements in church government that God had prescribed. In this they were much assisted by the very active and vociferous commissioners from Scotland – where episcopacy and set forms of worship had already been abolished – who now called for a 'conformity of kirks' across Britain and Ireland. Scottish pressure pushed many MPs further and faster than they would naturally have gone. The plan for a reforming synod was equally acceptable to those who believed that forms of church government were of human institution and needed to be shaped by the civil magistrate according the particular circumstances of time and place. But this latter group were keen to see the whole process – and the interim government of the church – in the hands of lay commissioners. From the outset, long before the division of the godly into Presbyterians and Independents, there were two sets of tensions. The first was between those who were sympathetic to the Genevan way, as pioneered in Scotland with disciplinary structures at local, regional and national levels maintaining orthodoxy and enforcing strict moral codes, as against those drawn to the widely disseminated testimony of returning exiles about the 'New England' (or Dutch) way, which favoured autonomous self-governing congregations that looked to

others for advice but not for judgement. The second (overlapping with but distinct from the first) separated those who would give the civil magistrate authority in matters of religion and those who wanted a strict separation of the affairs of church and state. In late 1641, fearing the consequences of a rift, the generality of London ministers agreed not to air their disagreements on these issues publicly.

There were always those who simply wanted to go back to how things were before, to what came to be known as 'the pure religion of Queen Elizabeth and King James' or the 'pure reformed Protestant religion without any connivance or popery or superstition'.¹¹ This apparent return to an erastian church with much local self-determination in matters of ceremony and discipline made it possible for many critics to support Charles in the unfolding conflict. Crucial in winning back the laity was the king's ability to persuade some heroes of the godly to accept bishoprics in 1641. These included not only Oxbridge dons like Ralph Brownrigg and John Prideaux, but most importantly James Ussher, who as archbishop of Armagh had stood up to Laud, and who was collated to Carlisle to speak up in parliament for a 'reduced' or 'primitive' episcopacy. These were men who would have been seen as 'godly' in the 1630s, opponents of 'the piety of the times'.¹² And what propelled this rethinking was the horror stories of Puritan excess which took over from the horror stories of episcopal excess – especially the outbreaks of iconoclasm, anticipating orders from the Commons (opposed by the Lords) for the removal of altar rails and the levelling of chancels, along with parliamentary protection of preachers who used extreme language against the prayer book (that it was a mortal sin to be present when prayers were read out of a book, or that the prayer book 'doth stink in the nostrils of God'),¹³ the impatience with reform that led to the mushrooming of the sects, and instant infamy of lay preachers such as those exposed by John Taylor in a succession of publications with titles like *New Preachers . . . [like] Greene the Feltmaker, Sencer the Horse Rubber, Quartermine the Brewers Clarke with Some Few Others that are Might[y] Sticklers in this New Kinde of Talking Trade, which Many Ignorant Coxcomber call Preaching* (1641). So the first defection of men who wanted to see the process of reformation advanced and the dregs of popery removed from the church preceded the outbreak of war. Already popular excess was a source of disunity.

The process of 'reforming the reformation', of creating a church that not only sounded Protestant but that also looked Protestant, proceeded unsystematically across the 1640s. Most bishops ceased to function as bishops in 1642 and 1643, the last church courts meeting fitfully in the

royalist West until 1644/5. Few conducted ordinations. Meanwhile what the Long Parliament authorised was in many places and in many ways anticipated by local action; but it was also in many places and in many ways stymied by local inaction. The Commons approved the appointment of lecturers in many towns and villages, and these men took over the pulpits from intimidated incumbents. A few hundred ministers who were deemed to have colluded with false teaching and practice in the 1630s or who were otherwise deemed scandalous in their ways of life by parish elites (often but not always Puritans) were deprived of their livings in the early 1640s; but a much larger purge, amounting to about one-third of the clergy, was effected in the later 1640s. It took commissioners from outside to impose change on most parishes in most areas. Gradually, as parliamentary county committees gained control of county after county, attempts to suppress use of the prayer book were attempted, but against a background of spasmodic protest and defiance. A parliamentary ordinance requiring the removal of all remaining monuments of idolatry and superstition was vigorously implemented in East Anglia by William Dowsing (who sought and was granted a personal licence to 'cleanse' the churches) but elsewhere the ordinance was much more spottily observed.¹⁴ In most of England and Wales, Laudian innovations (above all altars and altar rails) were removed, but what had survived the reign of Edward VI tended to survive the Civil Wars and Commonwealth.

Meanwhile, progress on setting up an Assembly (parliament rejected the title 'Synod') to reform the government, doctrine and worship of the church was painfully slow. In January 1642, days after the Attempt on the Five Members, the Commons made a fateful decision. The Commons would nominate and the Lords approve a list of painful and learned divines fit for the task. Thus from the very outset, the laity was to be in charge. What is more, some 30 MPs would join the 121 divines as auditors. Yet it took another eighteen months of wrangling and distraction before the Assembly met. When it did convene, on 1 July 1643, it was a hive of activity. It had 1244 plenary sessions over the next nine years and in the course of those sessions it hammered out a series of statements on church governance, catechetics and worship that still inform the practice of many evangelical churches in the modern world: the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Directory of Worship, the Larger Catechism and Shorter Catechism. These were and have remained the common property of Presbyterians and many Congregationalists. The Assembly also heard several hundred men preach, and on the basis of that and of committee scrutiny of their qualifications and

of testimonies about their manners of life, licensed them to preach and to proceed to ordination. But the issues that provoked the main clashes in the Assembly all concerned matters of church governance.¹⁵

The clerical consensus broke before the fragile lay-clerical alliance. Although there was no strong dissensus within the Assembly on matters of doctrine, nor about the errors of separatism, it became clear that the proponents of a theocratic Presbyterianism had the upper hand on matters of governance and discipline. Their resolve was stiffened by the arrival of Scottish advisors to the Assembly under the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant between the English and Scottish parliaments – the group included ministers like Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baillie. Within weeks the Scots were publicly declaring that they would not accept independent congregations within the national church, and it was this that caused five ‘Dissenting Brethren’, all men who had been in exile in the Netherlands in the 1630s, to issue their *Apologeticall Narration*. This was a public appeal for a degree of latitude in matters of discipline. The Brethren made it clear they wished to be part of a *national church* with national structures that defined matters of belief and practice and which could offer strong advice to individual parish communities. But they were just as convinced – from their own reading of scripture and from the testimony of those who had lived ‘the congregational way’ in ‘the howling wilderness’ of New England – that however much parishes and their leaders had a duty to listen to the fraternal advice of other covenanted communities, in the end each local church must retain ‘complete power of jurisdiction’ over their own affairs. This and their request for an ‘allowance of a latitude to some lesser differences’ fell on deaf ears and they were soon subject to powerful vilification from pulpit and in print.¹⁶ They were not suspended from the Assembly, nor did they withdraw from its deliberations, but they were to play an active part in the creation of its Confession of Faith and of its Catechisms.

Nonetheless, it was a turning point. Anti-Laudian unity and hope of a speedy reforming of the Reformation withered on the vine. It had been the hope that in the end all right-thinking, sincere men who submitted themselves to teasing out the true meaning of the scriptures would be able to cohere around new structures that would evangelise an ignorant and misinformed population and turn them from the things of the flesh to the things of the spirit. In its place came a Protestant Tower of Babel.

TEEMING LIBERTY, 1646–53

In 1646 the Puritan parliamentarians won the war against the king but began to lose the peace. Within months of the king's surrender (significantly) to the Scots at Newark, parliament had taken the system of church government approved by the Assembly, and based in all essentials on the system set up in Scottish Presbyterian minds from the 1580s and in Scottish law in 1641, and had diluted it down. Specifically they had intruded lay control at every level, from the appointment of ministers, through the exercise of discipline, to the need for national decisions to be ratified and promulgated through parliament. It was, Robert Baillie notoriously stated, a 'lame Erastian Presbytery'.¹⁷ Commissioners (laymen appointed by MPs, of course) in London and in every county were put to work dividing each shire ('province') into clusters of parishes ('classes'). It was expected that within months the new structures would be up and running. At the same time the lands of the bishops and of the Cathedral churches were being sold off, and the Committee for Scandalous Ministers was systematically removing those who had aided the royalist cause from their livings and appointing new ministers. The major framing documents of the new Church – its Catechisms, Confession of Faith and Directory of Worship – had been approved by the Assembly and promulgated. All seemed to be in place. But the wheels were about to come off.

In some counties – London, Essex and Lancashire leading the way – the new provincial and classical assemblies were established. In all eight county schemes were approved by parliament and partially realised, and another eight schemes were finalised but never approved by parliament. But in most counties the commissioners came up against obfuscation and procrastination so that no scheme was ever finalised. As political will sapped away over the course of 1648 and 1649, the system stalled and – even in London, Essex and Lancashire – became largely an empty shell, as we shall see. Where it did exist, even temporarily, we can find evidence of Calvinist orthodoxy and strict godly standards of behaviour being enforced; but since membership of the state church was not enforceable (and after 1650 not required), discipline, other than for ministers committed to a national church structure and fearful of expulsion from it, was of limited effect.¹⁸

What sustained Presbyterianism was the theological imperative that God willed that there should be one church, not many churches; that there was one truth not many truths, recoverable from scripture which itself chronicled the formation of the primitive church on Presbyterian

lines. This theological conviction was reinforced by the solemn and indissoluble covenant made not only by the English and Scots amongst themselves but with God, as solemn and binding as the marriage covenant, and that covenant required all who had taken it to work for a reformation 'according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches',¹⁹ taken to mean Geneva and Scotland. Men who had the same views of Man, God and Salvation, the same view of sin, grace and redemption, the same commitment to a reformation of manners, and even the same strong preference for a national church with no time for the sects, could be bitterly contemptuous of one another over the different ways they interpreted the obligations of the covenant.

The forces working against Presbyterianism were far stronger. Implementing the new forms at parish level was an uphill struggle. There was a 'prayer book rebellion' in 1647–8 as parishioners ejected ministers who would not use the Book of Common Prayer especially for the rites of passage. In dozens of parishes majority groups of parishioners tried to reintrude men expelled as scandalous a few years earlier. Although the parliamentary ban on the celebration of Christmas as a disguised pagan festival was largely successful in 1644–6, there were widespread popular disturbances on 25 December 1647, one of which, in and around Canterbury, led directly on to the popular royalist insurgency in 1648 known as the Second Civil War. Many ministers henceforth found it prudent to use stripped down versions of prayer-book services, shorn of all rubrics, for the sacraments and for burials.²⁰

A much greater threat came from the army and its commitment to freedom of expression and form. By mid 1647 a high proportion of the officers and troopers of the New Model Army had experienced, and were committed to, free forms of worship in which anyone could break open the scripture and lead their companies in free prayer. To give just one example: at the prayer meeting during the Putney Debates Lt Col William Goffe offered a meditation on Revelation 17:13–14: that 'kings of the earth . . . have bin instruments to cast off the Pope's supremacy, but we may see if they have not put themselves into the same state', before attacking the royal supremacy, and warning against being 'the instruments of giving any life or strength to that power'.²¹ After many such prayer meetings, neither Grandees nor the Army Council had any intention of returning to the pew as obedient hearers of the Word. Many of them attended Baptist or other separatist assemblies when not on duty, and many also held views that the godly would think of as heterodox (even heretical). And they lacked the formal training (and languages) that would allow them to be taken seriously by the ministry.

So where there were chaplains in the army, they were frequently denouncing just what the soldiers found most wholesome in their ways of worship. It converted their disappointment with particular ministers into a calloused anticlericalism.

And this same army became convinced that it could not leave a settlement of the kingdom to the dealings of a corrupt king and to a parliament dominated by corrupt politicians. And as the army, guided indeed by its communal prayer, came to articulate the terms of a settlement worthy of the sacrifice of so many godly and courageous comrades, it put religious liberty at the heart of its demands. The Heads of the Proposals drawn up by the generals in July 1647 proposed 'that there be a repeal of all Acts or clauses in any Act enjoining the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and imposing any penalties for neglect thereof; as also of all Acts or clauses of any Act, imposing any penalty for not coming to church, or for meetings elsewhere for prayer or other religious duties, exercises or ordinances';²² and that all orders and ordinances imposing the Solemn League and Covenant be repealed. To ensure that these terms became the basis of the settlement with the king, the army had leading 'incendiaries' expelled from parliament. The party that had pushed for the national Presbyterian settlement lost its control of the Houses.

The Presbyterians had not only sought to create the structures of a confessional state; they had mounted a hysterical campaign to vilify separatists of all sorts, alleging that they were not men of conscience worshipping god soberly and discreetly, but that they were heretical, blasphemous and licentious, their faulty ecclesiology both caused by a defective soteriology and resulting in immoral conduct. The classic statement of this view was Thomas Edward's *Gangraena: Or a Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries*, a title which says it all! First published in February 1646, it was twice reissued engorged with horror stories sent in by readers. Edwards was a lecturer at St Botolph's, Aldgate. He had spent the 1630s in a campaign of 'guerrilla preaching'²³ against Laudianism, but with the new decade came a new target: Edwards was first in the field against Independency and toleration in 1641, and was again first in the field against the Dissenting Brethren in the Assembly (*Antapologia* (1644)). He became the greatest critic of John Milton's Divorce tracts, and was dubbed 'shallow Edwards' in Milton's poem *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament* (c. 1646).²⁴ He was to get more angry yet – his last work was entitled *The Casting Down of the Last and Strongest Hold of Satan. Or, A Treatise*

against *Toleration and Pretended Liberty of Conscience*. But *Gangraena* was his masterpiece: it enumerated 16 kinds of sect and 266 heresies and blasphemies; but especially important was the way he made mainstream Calvinist Independents to blame for the spread of error.²⁵ Their libertarianism bred others' licentiousness.

As Presbyterians braced themselves against the prayer-book rebellion and against the wildly exaggerated threat of sectarian hedonism, they found themselves also challenged by an insidious third force: erastianism. A generation of intellectuals had grown up confident of their own ability to reach the truth through study and prayer, and contemptuous of clerical claims to a superiority of wisdom or of privileged access to the Holy Spirit as guide and guarantor of truth. Viscount Saye and Sele and Lord Brooke had both argued against set forms of prayer – the former saying that just as it was absurd to say that because some men had lost the use of their legs, there should be a law requiring all men to use crutches, so it was absurd to make the spiritual weakness of some force all to use a prayer book.²⁶ One of the most remarkable features of the freedom of the press in the 1640s was that it gave lay men and some lay women the chance to address fundamental theological issues, and to become proponents of ideas that challenged the most cherished of Calvinist beliefs. The most brilliant, thick-skinned and determined such thinker was John Milton. The more he put his theological ideas into print, the more he was attacked by the Presbyterian establishment, and the more they attacked him the more he attacked them. 'New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large', he wrote to round off his poem *On the New Forcers of Conscience*.²⁷ And disdain soon turned to contempt and vitriol:

New foes arise
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free Conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw.²⁸

He was not alone. All the Leveller leaders came to denounce the Presbyterian clergy as violently as they had previously denounced the bishops – Richard Overton in April 1645 launched the Marpriest tracts, a series of scornful, witty tracts inspired by the Elizabethan Marprelate tracts and now aimed at the Presbyterian clergy.²⁹

All this bad publicity undoubtedly rattled the Presbyterian preachers and those who did revere their learning, their pastoral guidance, their zeal. So it is easy to lose sight of the fact that even at the end of the 1640s, the vast majority of the population went into their own

parish church or (if they had the kind of choice town-dwellers had) into a neighbouring parish church. Just under half of the clergy had served since the 1630s or earlier, but most were willing to conform to the liturgical prescriptions of the Assembly, although they frequently returned to the words (not the rubrics) of the prayer book for the rites of passage. By 1648, the old prayer book was being used on occasion in about one-third of the parishes; by 1656 it was about half.³⁰

Almost half of the parish clergy were new, for the most part able and enthusiastic preachers, but faced by a variety of obstructions. All the rights of presentment to livings previously held by the crown, the bishops or the cathedral chapters, and the two thousand or so in the gifts of convicted royalist delinquents or malignants, had been transferred to the state, and were handled (down to the rise of the Protectorate) by a parliamentary committee working closely with the Assembly. But those who had lost their rights often made life uncomfortable for the new incumbents (Richard Baxter in Kidderminster, for example, continued to be harassed by Sir Ralph Clare, the old patron of the living, and his experience was not untypical);³¹ and godly ministers who tried to limit access to Holy Communion to those they deemed worthy were likely to find other parishioners retaliating by withholding tithes.³² The failure to create or to sustain Presbyterian structures meant that ministers in this position had to look for support to often unsympathetic or just plain overburdened civil magistrates. In London, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, clergy set up systems for mutual encouragement and support, as with the adaptation of Syon College on the banks of the Thames in London where ministers met to share problems, seek advice and support, to encourage and embolden one another, to draw new strength for the task of bringing a hostile world to own the things of Christ. Despite all the difficulties, by the early 1650s hundreds of ministers around the country had set up a pattern of worship which reflected long-term Puritan aspirations, centred around powerful preaching, and were putting great efforts into parish catechising and instruction. Many may have felt they were moving too slowly in the right direction, but it was both things: too slowly *but* in the right direction.

It is unlikely that more than 5 per cent of the population had opted out of the parish system and into gathered churches, principally Congregationalist and Baptist churches, who were separated most obviously but not solely over the efficacy or inefficacy of infant baptism. The great period of expansion was in the years 1647–54 – in Norfolk the number of Congregationalist ‘churches’ grew over that

period from 5 to 31, for example.³³ By the later 1650s, there was an absolute minimum of 120 covenanted congregations, some (like Yarmouth in Norfolk) with as many as 500 members, although most probably had numbers in the range 50–120. They were networked if not organised, with an impressive web of connection and regular exchange of information and advice; they looked to New England for guidance and inspiration – texts such as John Cotton's *Keys of the Kingdome* or *The Platform of Discipline* acting as lodestars; and they had friends in high places – John Owen, sometime chaplain to Fairfax and Cromwell, and then to the Council of State of the Rump and Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, emerging as *primus inter pares* amongst them.³⁴ Many of the ministers managed – with an unease that varied from time to time and place to place – to combine an appointment in the state church with invited ministry in a covenanted community drawn not only from their own but from neighbouring parishes. It was this solemn but local covenant, together with the establishment of a complete set of pastor and teacher, ruling elders and deacons, which distinguished Congregationalists. A great majority of those who ran the churches were orthodox Calvinists in their views on God, Man and Salvation, the most famous exception being John Goodwin, ejected by the Presbyterians from his living at St Stephen's, Coleman Street in 1645 for setting up a covenanted community within his parish, accused of Socinianism as early as 1639 and brazening out his radical Arminianism under army protection in and after 1651, when he published *Redemption Redeemed*.

The Baptists, by contrast, were from the outset divided over soteriology. The Particular Baptists, following an experimental Calvinist line, were less numerous than the General Baptists, who believed in universal redemption, though a redemption only owned by those who entered into a covenant with Christ through Believers' Baptism. Both groups were more radical than the Congregationalists, having a strong sense that true Christians must separate themselves from the degenerate society in which they lived, and they held that all magistracy and therefore all civil power was irredeemably corrupt. Many Baptists – Henry Lawrence, president of the Council of State under Cromwell, and a whole splinter from John Goodwin's congregation being examples – were radicalised members of Congregationalist churches. By the mid 1650s there were 250 Baptist churches.³⁵ Like the Congregationalists, they had a strong presence in London. A greater part of Leveller leadership combined their political activism with membership of General Baptist churches, and their collapse as a movement has been

connected to the refusal of the Baptist leaders in London to condone their attacks on the army in 1649.

Between them the Congregationalists and Baptists had perhaps 80,000–100,000 actively covenanted members, less than 2 per cent of the population. The Quakers add another 1 per cent. The Quakers privileged the action of the Holy Spirit, working immediately and directly over the work of Christ in history and in the gospels. Knowledge of God was mediated to man- and womankind neither through the sacraments nor through scripture but through the indwelling spirit. This empowered those beyond the margins of literacy and it obviated the need for an ordained ministry. The Quakers thus fused Puritan spirituality with Arminian universalism. As they spread their message at great open-air rallies, and invited persecution so that they could use it to demonstrate their sincerity, they took on all other churches, shouting down preachers, organising tithe strikes, disrespecting gentlemen and judges – most famously by refusing to remove their hats as a sign of deference. Many who joined them had previously been Levellers, Diggers, Baptists or Fifth Monarchists. It is a reminder that what we often think of as a series of revolutionary movements were in fact revolutionary moments, with the Quakers as the last, largest and most persistent of those moments.³⁶

There were other epiphenomena of this time of teeming freedom: a large number of tiny and often transient sects which created a disproportionate amount of anxiety at the time and took up a great deal of historians' attention in the 1970s and 1980s. Many had heterodox views on the Trinity and on redemption, believing that the Holy Spirit could raise men and women to a state of permanent perfection beyond the occasion of sin, what the Westminster Assembly defined as the heresies of Familism and antinomianism. Some were led by individuals who believed themselves to be given special graces to identify, call forth and proclaim those whom God had elected to salvation – as with John Reeve and his supplanter Lodowick Muggleton, and Thomas Totney, who rechristened himself TheAuroraJohn Tany;³⁷ while others believed that they were called forth to be the witnesses of the long-heralded Second Coming and 1,000-year rule of the saints that would precede the Final Judgement (the Fifth Monarchists).³⁸ None of these movements had more than a few hundred followers. But between 1647 and 1653 little – not even a Blasphemy Act and the independent action of godly JPs – could stop them in their tracks. Amidst heightened fears of God's judgement on such spiritual licentiousness, and mutual recrimination about who was to blame, liberty teemed.

THE PUBLIC PROFESSION HELD FORTH, 1653–60

Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector under a paper constitution hastily agreed in December 1653. And he brought a degree of calm authority and a cooling of tempers. This is evident from the constitutional framework itself. The so-called Toleration Act of 1650 had repealed all acts requiring attendance at church on Sundays – this applied to Catholics as well as Protestants, thus repealing the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity and the whole range of anti-recusant legislation. Utterly impractical was the clause that required attendance at some form of worship since it left the magistrate to prove each person had *not* been at a service of the Word rather than requiring that he or she prove that they had. So notional was this requirement that the Rump did not even bother to have the Act printed.³⁹ The intention was to provide civil equality as well as religious liberty: no one was to suffer religious tests before gaining access to office or to the courts; and this was greatly strengthened by the Act of the Nominated Assembly in 1653 that transferred the registration of births, marriages and deaths to civil registrars. Baptisms and marriages became private acts in particular churches, and not a guarantor of legal rights.

The *Instrument of Government* reinforced this freedom and this equality. It laid down that 'the Christian religion, as it is contained in the Scriptures, be held forth and recommended as the public profession of these nations'. Quite what that meant was left vague: in 1652, John Owen and others close to him had proposed that all ministers should sign up to sixteen 'principles of our religion' and 'the biblical proofs of those principles' without belief in which scripture teaches us 'salvation is not to be obtained'. But that liberty was not untrammelled. It was liberty for 'all species of Protestant',⁴⁰ which did not include prelatists. Cromwell did not incorporate these principles specifically into his settlement of 1654, but there is no reason to doubt his personal acceptance of those principles – essentially the proposal that Holy Scripture is that rule by which we know God; that God exists and is known by faith alone; that Christ, who was true God and Man in one person, is 'the one mediator between God and Man', and that we are justified by grace through the merits of Christ and not by works. To be able to hold a preaching position in the church, one had to acknowledge the sufficiency of scripture for our knowledge of God, Man and Salvation; the Trinity; and the Calvinist doctrine of absolute predestination. Yet Cromwell's rage was not directed at the ignorance, superstition and idolatry of the uninformed and the

misinformed. He directed his visceral rage against clerical pretension and arrogance.

The *Instrument of Government* also called for 'able and painful teachers' who would instruct the people and confute 'error, heresy and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine'. It stated 'that to the public Profession none shall be compelled by penalties or otherwise, but endeavours be used to win them by sound Doctrine and the Example of a good conversation'. Win them over, do not force them over. It gave freedom to 'all who profess Faith in God by Jesus Christ' so long as they do not cause civil injury or actual disturbance of others; except that 'this liberty be not extended to popery, prelacy [or those who] practise licentiousness'. No penalties were laid down for any of these transgressors and none was created during the nine months during which Cromwell and the Council had the freedom to make law. It confirmed that all laws contrary to the spirit and letter of the preceding clauses should be abrogated outright. So the Protectorate made clear what it would like to see; but it hobbled its own ability to make it happen other than by exhortation. And underpinning this permissive religious settlement was the provision of clause 24 which gave the Lord Protector the right to veto any parliamentary bill that was (at his uncontrollable discretion) seen as being 'contrary to the matters contained' in the *Instrument*.

Hence the frustration of those with an itch to impose their own certainties on others, or rather the godly's involuntary reflex to punish the enemies of God, before God punished the godly for not punishing them. Yet not one person died for religion in Protectoral Britain. Cromwell seems to have boasted that 'Truly I have . . . made a difference; and have, as Jude says, plucked many out of the fire – the raging fire of persecution, which did tyrannise over their consciences'.⁴¹ When Cromwell declined the crown in 1657 but accepted a revised constitution, he agreed to restrictions, not unlike those he had agreed with when Owen proposed them in 1652, but which he had dropped from his adaptation of those measures in 1654.⁴²

The Protectoral regime did have a concept of heresy and blasphemy, but wherever possible Cromwell sought to persuade those palpably guilty to recant or at least to promise to be silent. When the first Protectorate parliament and the courts went after John Biddle for in-your-face, relentless proclamation of anti-Trinitarian publications, Cromwell spirited him away to the Isles of Scilly, gave him a decent pension and left him to think it over. And then there is the case of James Nayler. Nayler was brought before parliament in December 1656 for imitating Christ's entry into Jerusalem as he rode into Bristol escorted

by followers who sang psalms and strewed clothes in his path. For several weeks parliament debated whether it had the power to punish a blasphemy too heinous to be imagined and therefore some so horrid that no law existed against it. Eventually the Commons narrowly voted down an attempt to have Nayler executed, but they did vote that he be savagely flogged, branded and his tongue bored with a red-hot iron. We now know that although Cromwell was constitutionally prevented from intervening, he was doing much behind the scenes to prevent this outcome, and that, once sentence was passed, he helped to orchestrate a petitioning campaign in an attempt to get the sentence mitigated or suspended.⁴³ Cromwell spoke passionately about liberty for all right-thinking people, and it is true that by that he meant rather less than his excited rhetoric seemed to imply. But since all but 5 per cent of the population attended the churches ministered to by those right-thinking people, since he chose to chide and hector, but not persecute, most of that 5 per cent, it does not matter. Cromwell freed some to evangelise, but he freed others to mind their own business. He was increasingly insistent that those who misread the scriptures to find in them what he *knew* was not really there were as much a problem as these old enemies. In an exasperated and exhausted speech at the end of his life, he lashed out at the sects:

Every sect must be uppermost, that every sort of men may get the power into their hands . . . it is not only that, but we have an appetite for variety, to be not only making wounds . . . but be grovelling with his fingers in those wounds. This is that men will be at . . . in spiritual effects. They will be making wounds, and rending and tearing and making them wider than they are.⁴⁴

Recent scholarship has focused both on demonstrating the effectiveness of the state church of the Protectorate and on narrowing the conception of religious liberty around that church. Even the Congregationalists set up a conference at the Savoy Palace in 1658 which produced a declaration of fundamental beliefs (rooted in the Westminster Confession) that would be a touchstone of what could be openly preached and published. It was hoped that Oliver Cromwell would act on it, but his death plunged the country back into political chaos. Cromwell himself had reason to be proud of the church he established, a radically erastian church, a partnership of his providentially validated civil authority and the aspirations of the godly in each local community. Cromwell set up a mechanism for admitting men to ministry, some of them ordained, some of them not. He set up bodies of the godly to

remove the indolent, the ignorant, the morally unworthy.⁴⁵ He used the large sums generated by the confiscation of the impropriations held by the crown, the bishops, the cathedrals and by convicted royalists to augment the stipends of the ministers of more than 1,000 of the poorest livings in the country. And he set out on a programme of rationalisation, uniting tiny parishes in once-wealthy towns and breaking up large parishes into smaller parishes, each with its own preaching minister and governing vestry. Most of this worked smoothly and uncontentiously. He had acquired as Lord Protector the patronage to almost half the parishes in England – those previously held by the crown, the bishops and cathedral chapters, and by convicted royalists – and he took great personal interest in working with local people to identify and appoint men suitable to the particular needs of each parish. There were those who squirmed at all this, but it is a major achievement.⁴⁶

Cromwell himself was intolerant of intolerance, of blasphemy, of licentiousness paraded as religious observance. But his intolerance fell a long way short of persecution. By and large he found the penalties available to the courts when he took power to be sufficient for their purpose. He proposed no legislation to prevent men and women from worshipping as they wished. He winked at the widespread use of stripped-down versions of prayer-book services. A vast amount of theology he disapproved of was published uncensored; and he did not prosecute anyone for religious opinions they were reported to have shared with others *behind closed doors* and with like-minded folk. He saw no point in punishing people for condemning themselves to Hell. Innumerable gathered churches, including the hundreds of General Baptist churches preaching rank Arminianism to one another, were left undisturbed. He issued threats against Catholics and Episcopalians threatening to enforce what was left of the legislation against their gathering for worship, but neither was followed up. Occasionally, in London (but only in London?), those attending Catholic Mass and Anglican Holy Communion were arrested by stern-faced soldiers as they left church, had their names taken, and after a spell in the cooler to think about it were released without charge.⁴⁷

Quakers published freely and used their own names on the title-pages of their pamphlets. No doubt note was taken on what they wrote, and no doubt Cromwell's secret police kept files on them all. But it was not for their heterodox theology or their own open meetings that they were arrested and mistreated. It was for disrupting services in what they insisted on calling 'steeple-houses' rather than churches; that, or for organising tithe-strikes aimed directly and specifically to undermine the

state church. He issued a single proclamation against Quakers, specifically against their disrupting of services in parish churches, using strong language of disapprobation, but apart from saying that if they persisted 'we shall esteem them as disturbers of the civil peace' and calling on magistrates to treat them as such, he laid down no penalties and drew attention to no statutes or ordinances under which they could be prosecuted. It would seem that he wanted them binding over on bail-bonds to keep the peace, a form of suspended fines.

This is typical of his attitude. He had vanquished clerical tyranny, cleansed the national church of institutionalised idolatry, provided nutritious preaching for all who dragged themselves to church. His energies were now devoted to putting oomph into the reformation of manners – allaying the wrath of God by inhibiting public displays of immorality, and seeking, by preventing licentious acts, to turn men and women from indulging the flesh to harkening to the spirit.

CONCLUSION

Puritanism both triumphed and disintegrated in the English Revolution. It triumphed in that the structures, forms and characteristic beliefs of the Church of England as it had coagulated out of the elements that made it up in and after 1559 were formally suppressed. The men who controlled the parliamentary war effort and who governed the country between 1646 and 1660 were overwhelmingly men who would own the name of Puritan. There were exceptions early on – men like Henry Marten who climbed aboard the Puritan juggernaut, their scatological anticlericalism disguising a sceptical free-thinking – but none remained at the top. At a parish level, godly ministers well able to deliver powerful sermons calling men and women to repentance, to Bible study, to simplicity of life and greater self-discipline controlled most of the pulpits. Most of the tiny majority who organised themselves outside that state church shared the same morality, the same sense of sin and redemption, of providence and the special destiny of the English, of God's immanence and of Christ's imminent Second Coming, as those who railed against them from the pulpit. But they were endlessly drawn into internal feuds against one another – over the relations of church and state, over the nature of the church. Most of the godly never forgave the army and its friends for killing the king rather than making the best deal they could with him. When the king came back, willing to make a deal with those who had kept him out, they were too demoralised, too embittered, too divided to take advantage of the window of opportunity

he gave them. Just as many who yearned for the old church had spent the 1650s squeezing what comfort they could from the ruins of the church they loved, so most of the godly squeezed what comfort they could from a restored church less vindictive at a local than at a national level, while seeking additional solace when they could from illegal conventicles and private meetings over and above that mere conformity. A distinct minority defied the church and suffered the consequences, for a generation or more. Puritanism, if not the Puritan Revolution, limped on, proud in spirit but with a heavy heart.

Notes

1. S. R. Gardiner, *The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution, 1603–1660* (London, 1876).
2. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, 1642–1649*, 4 vols. (London, 1893); Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*, 4 vols. (London, 1903).
3. E.g. *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–1647*, ed. W. Haller, 3 vols. (New York, 1934); Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955); D. M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1941); *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution*, ed. D. M. Wolfe (New York, 1944).
4. *The Works of William Laud*, ed. W. Scott and J. Bliss, 7 vols. in 9 parts (Oxford, 1847–60), iv. 284.
5. *Ibid.* v. 321.
6. T. G. Barnes, 'County politics and a Puritan cause célèbre: Somerset church ales, 1633', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 9 (1959), 103–22.
7. *The Works of William Laud*, vi. ii. 43.
8. J. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993), pp. 75–9.
9. The best introduction remains H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The fast sermons of the Long Parliament', in H. R. Trevor-Roper, ed., *Essays in British History Presented to Sir Keith Feiling* (London, 1964), pp. 85–138.
10. R. Strier, 'The Root and Branch Petition and the Grand Remonstrance', in D. L. Smith, R. Strier, D. Bevington, eds., *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576–1649* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 224–44 (in which Strier reminds us that in the original the whole wicked system by 'archbishops and lord bishops, and deans and archdeacons &c' was to be removed not 'root and branch' but 'roots and branches').
11. See the discussion in Morrill, *Nature*, pp. 158–9.
12. For the prevalence of this phrase, see S. P. Salt, 'The origins of Sir Edward Dering's attack on the ecclesiastical hierarchy c.1625–40', *Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), 21–52, esp. at p. 33.
13. It was said by a Cheshire curate, John Jones, and reported to Sir Thomas Aston, Brit.Lib. Add. MS. 36913 fo.136.

14. J. Morrill, 'William Dowsing and the administration of iconoclasm', in *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*, ed. T. Cooper (Woodbridge, 2001), 1–28; J. Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2003).
15. C. van Dixhoorn, 'Reforming the Reformation: theological debate in the Westminster Assembly 1643–1652', 7 vols. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005), I, chs. 1–2.
16. *An Apologeticall Narration, humbly submitted to the Honourable Houses of Parliament. By Tho: Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jer: Burroughes, William Bridge* (London, 1643). There is a modern facsimile edition, edited by R.S. Paul with the same title and an excellent introduction (Philadelphia, 1963).
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5 Later Stuart Puritanism

JOHN SPURR

'The prophets don't live for ever!' warned Matthew Mead in his funeral sermon for the Puritan minister Timothy Cruso in November 1697. The old guard was passing. Already that winter the City of London had lost six Dissenting ministers. A distinct clerical generation was bowing out. Of seventy-eight Dissenting ministers pursuing their ministry in the capital in 1695, forty-three were 'Bartolomeans', Puritan ministers ejected from their parishes by the Act of Uniformity on St Bartholomew's Day 1662, and twenty-six of these ejected ministers would die before the century's end. The very last of the Bartolomeans, Nathan Denton, struggled on in Yorkshire, preaching where he could, and never repenting of his nonconformity until overtaken by death in 1720: to the end he was, in Edmund Calamy's words, 'the picture of an old Puritan'.¹

In 1720 the Puritans were apparently a thing of the past. Even in 1680 Bunyan had felt the need to explain the label: 'the man was a godly old Puritan, for so the godly were called in times past'.² In the later seventeenth century the term was acquiring an air of rather generalised piety. In 1688 Roger Morrice noted that the Princess of Orange had recommended the 'holy heavenly mortified life' practised by some 'very godly' Dutch Protestants, 'like the old Puritans in England . . . These keep communion in all public acts of worship . . . but go on Wednesdays to conventicles, private meetings for humiliation and fasting etc., where they rehearse the last sermon, confer upon some practical questions, or upon the catechism, pray and hear a sermon.' As an adjective, 'Puritan' was applicable to the 'more strict and sober' Muslims or Papists.³ Just as significantly (for nothing seems quite as dead and gone as those subjects embalmed in the history books), the post-1662 generation was busy turning Puritanism into a subject of historical study: Morrice was collecting the manuscripts of the Elizabethan Puritan movement and working up his own 'ecclesio-political' history of England; Calamy, Ralph Thoresby, Daniel Williams and other Dissenters were all hard at

work preserving and celebrating the Puritan heritage; and in the 1730s Neal published his magisterial *History of the Puritans*.⁴ It is, then, understandable if an elegiac note often creeps into accounts of later Stuart Puritanism. But, as this chapter will show, Puritanism was adapting to new circumstances and re-forming in the guise of Dissent: Puritanism was evolving, not dying, in the sixty years after 1662.

THE FORTUNES OF DISSENT

In the later seventeenth century 'Dissenters' or 'Nonconformists' were all those Protestants who refused to worship with the Church of England as it had been re-established in 1662. It was as if all the Puritan impulses that had overflowed into the torrent of competing denominations and sects of the 1650s, the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers, and smaller sects, chaotic and uncontrolled, were now channelled into a single turbulent stream. They were 'Dissenters' from the establishment. The law told them so and the law stipulated that they would be penalised for not attending the parish church and punished for gathering in their own congregations or conventicles. The different groups thus labelled were all outside the law, vulnerable to prosecution and persecution, and excluded from full participation in civil and political life. They were the target of new legislation, especially the Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670 and the Five Mile Act of 1665, but they could also be prosecuted under old Elizabethan and Jacobean statutes. In short, Dissent is a historical conundrum. It was an artificial category imposed from outside the Puritan tradition on a diversity of religious groups who were mutually suspicious or even antagonistic. Yet the experience of being treated as a single category may have helped these congregations to develop a stronger sense of their shared interests and common tradition.

The basic form taken by Dissent was a religious meeting in a house, hall or barn. Pejoratively labelled as 'conventicles' by the authorities, such meetings had been the staple of Puritanism for decades. Within the pattern of the meeting's standard exercises – as just described by Morrice – there was considerable variation. Doctrine varied: some congregations espoused Calvinism, others Arminianism; some admitted only those who offered testimony of their conversion or underwent adult baptism, others admitted any pious and God-fearing individual. Dissenters differed over the qualifications and appointment of pastors, the autonomy of congregations and relations with the Church of England. Some Presbyterians looked forward to 'comprehension', their

reunion with a more generously defined national church; other Dissenters, however, had divorced themselves from any national church, while the Quakers denounced all churches as formalist and domineering institutions. In the light of this diversity, and in the face of persecution and harassment, the identity of individual congregations and of a broader 'Dissenting interest' was derived in large measure from its clerical leadership. In the grand tradition of Puritanism, the pastors and the preachers were the living embodiment of the godly cause.

Prominent in the ranks of Dissent were the ejected clergy of 1662 and their followers. These ministers were significant because of their eminence and their numbers, and because their ejection was a betrayal of the apparent promise made in 1660 of a broad and godly national church. Although the Presbyterians had brought Charles II back to his throne, they found themselves excluded from the eventual religious settlement. Between 1660 and the summer of 1662 about 1,900 of these Puritan clergymen were ejected from their parishes in England and Wales. Some left out of principled opposition to a national church, others because their legal title to the living was dubious. Puritan hopes were finally dashed by the Act of Uniformity's narrow definition of the national church with no latitude allowed to 'tender consciences'. Many of the clergy driven out by the Act resented the obligation to use and acknowledge the prayer book or the Thirty-Nine Articles, while others were more troubled by the explicit renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant or of their previous ministry exercised under Presbyterian ordination. As these were personal and clerical scruples of conscience they did not necessarily preclude the minister from attending his parish church as a layman, nor were they immediately relevant to his former flock. So some 'moderate' Dissenters charitably remained in communion with the church: the ejected Presbyterian Thomas Manton went to St Paul's Covent Garden to hear the sermons of his successor, Simon Patrick. But other ejected ministers, like the Independents Thomas Jollie or Mead, would have no truck with the restored church. 'Martyrs' to their admirers and hypocrites to their critics, the ejected ministers remained a visible and audible presence in the land. While some continued to live openly in their former parishes, others moved to Puritan strongholds such as the huge London parish of St Giles Cripplegate, and yet others took shelter in sympathetic gentry households. Talk of a mass exodus to New England came to nothing. Those without private means found themselves dependent upon the generosity of their followers and patrons, or obliged to earn a living as schoolmasters, tutors or physicians. This was also the experience of

other leading Puritan divines of the 1650s who were not, strictly speaking, ejected ministers, but who contributed to the spiritual and moral leadership of Restoration Dissent. John Owen and Richard Baxter were two of the most famous such survivors, but the list also includes George Griffiths, John Howe and the Baptist leaders Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin. Nor should we overlook the younger generation of ministers who, after an education in one of the private Dissenting academies, or overseas, came to the fore in the 1670s and 1680s.

The world of Restoration Dissent was created through the personal connections, letters and meetings of these ministers and their followers. Owen, for example, lived and preached in Moorgate in the 1660s; in 1669 he joined in a combination lecture at Hackney with the Independents Nye and Brooks and the Presbyterians Bates and Watson; and in 1673 he succeeded Caryl as pastor to the congregation in Leadenhall Street. George Griffiths led an Independent congregation at various venues including Plaisterers' and Girdlers' Halls, but he also operated in Kent and the West Country, and his congregation seems to have had links with the Bedford meeting led by Bunyan. Glimpsed in the records of the state and its informers, the surviving correspondence and writings of the divines, and congregational archives, this was a subculture of strenuous religious action. Moreover this was activity pursued in the face of persecution.

Yet in truth that persecution was sporadic. It varied from year to year, place to place, and denomination to denomination. Although the Quakers suffered extensive and prolonged persecution, the 'sober' Presbyterians might experience little more than minor harassment. Much depended upon the zeal of local magistrates and the perceived political threat posed by Dissent. General persecution of Dissenters was at its height in the mid 1660s and again in the early 1680s. While contemporaries routinely disparaged Dissenters as fanatics and former rebels, there was, for the most part, limited popular support for persecution and widespread distaste for professional informers. The Dissenting clergy suffered the brunt of persecution: some were, like William Jenkyn, 'murdered in Newgate', not by assassins, but by disease and deprivation; others enjoyed less close confinement and could even travel while technically imprisoned. For their part, Dissenters embraced persecution as an opportunity to witness for their faith: they assured themselves that there was more spiritual knowledge to be gained 'from the retirement of a nasty prison' than from an excess of freedom.⁵

The political fortunes of Dissent fluctuated according to royal interests. In 1672, on the eve of an unpopular war, Charles II reversed

policy and licensed Dissenters' meetings under a Declaration of Indulgence, only to revoke these licences two years later. Although Dissent had political influence at court, in both Houses of Parliament and in the City of London, it found it difficult to translate this into a single successful political campaign for the amelioration of the Dissenters' legal position. In part this was because Dissenters pulled in two directions: some aspired to comprehension, while others sought only toleration. Dissent also suffered by its association with radical politics. The involvement of sectarians, Baptists and Independents in conspiracies from Venner's rising to Monmouth's rebellion tainted Dissent with political extremism. James II's overtures exposed the conflicted ambitions of Dissent once again. Was it desirable or even safe to ally with an idolatrous false religion like popery in pursuit of their own religious freedom? Although some Dissenters offered their thanks for the 1687 Declaration of Indulgence, the majority rallied to the Protestant cause and welcomed William of Orange's intervention in 1688.

The Glorious Revolution was cleverly presented in different lights to different interests. Dissenters were encouraged to believe that William would realign English Protestantism with the Reformed churches of Europe and reconnect the Church of England with its Reformation roots. They also enthusiastically subscribed to the notions of a 'godly revolution' and of William's regime as a vehicle for national moral and religious renewal. In reality the Revolution was a mixed blessing for Dissent. Moves for a comprehension failed, the Church of England retained its privileges, and public office remained an Anglican monopoly. The 1689 Toleration Act provided licensed freedom of public worship for Dissenters, but paradoxically it also doomed them to second-class status.

The Revolution politicised the issue of Dissent afresh. Whig and Tory now became the poles of politics. Whigs, who identified themselves with the Revolution and toleration, could count on moral and political support from Dissent. By receiving the Anglican sacrament once a year Dissenters qualified themselves for office, but this 'occasional conformity' was as provocative as it was cynical. When Lord Mayor Sir Humphrey Edwin proceeded to Mead's meeting house in London with the City sword carried before him in 1697, it caused 'great offence, even to the most considerate Dissenters, who look upon it as a very imprudent act'.⁶ Occasional conformity, partisan control of local offices and the limited nature of the franchise made it simple enough to evade the letter of the law when it came to electing MPs. In reaction the Tories identified Dissent as a threat to the Church of England and to all that was associated with it. Tory MPs and their Anglican allies

proclaimed the 'church in danger' and stirred up the mob to attack Dissenting chapels. In 1710 the Sacheverell riots saw the destruction of meeting houses in London, Bristol, Gainsborough and Walsall. On briefly gaining control of the Commons, the Tories pushed through the short-lived Occasional Conformity Act (1711) and Schism Act (1714) in the hope of curbing Dissent. Modern commentators, dazzled by the Toleration Act's longevity, have perhaps lost sight of just how precarious religious freedom must have seemed to Dissenters in the reigns of William and Anne. Dissenters' fears that toleration would be rescinded were perfectly genuine: for example, they took elaborate legal precautions to prevent their meeting houses from falling into the wrong hands if their worship was once again proscribed. It was only after 1714, with a new dynasty on the throne and the Whigs gradually extending their hold over the political system, that religious freedom began to acquire an air of unquestioned permanence.

THE INTERNAL HISTORY OF DISSENT

Dissent has an 'internal' history made up of its spiritual concerns, pious practices, theological tendencies and organisational problems. Although often reminiscent of earlier Puritanism, Dissent had its own character and that is reflected in the richer evidence that it has left behind. After 1662 the legal definition of Dissent creates more sharply focused denominational identities. We encounter identifiable leaders and spokesmen, such as the ministers and others who negotiate with the churchmen over comprehension and toleration, who put forth statements in the name of the Dissenting interest, or who sit on various committees to represent denominational interests in the 1690s and after. The state labelled individuals by denomination, if not always accurately, when licensing them as preachers or prosecuting them. Dissenting congregations began to keep their own records. These 'church books' list members of the congregation, and record the admission and dismissal of members, the disciplining of errant brothers and sisters, the appointment of pastors, the celebration of communions and the holding of prayer meetings and fast days. Congregational archives also contain evidence of the financial and legal arrangements, such as trusts and bequests, made to support the pastor or to build and maintain the chapel. Numerous congregations possess such records running from the later seventeenth century down to the modern day and these constitute one of the main elements of a congregation's denominational identity.

Statistical evidence of Dissent survives. The Church of England's 'Compton Census' of 1676 found the proportion of Dissenters in each diocese varied between 0.8 per cent and 10.6 per cent of the diocesan population, but was below 5 per cent in most dioceses. Of course no survey is better than its questions and its respondents, and the Compton Census has to be treated with caution. For example, the 'partial conformity' that was so prevalent in the Restoration period, with many going to church on Sunday morning and to a conventicle in the afternoon, suggests that the census might underestimate the strength of Dissent. Census statistics can be cross-referenced to other data from the records of persecution, the Hearth Tax and the licences issued under the 1672 Indulgence or the 1689 Toleration. Such research has produced impressive estimates of the strength of Dissent. In the 1680s around 12 per cent of Warwickshire's population were Dissenters, and these have been further broken down into 500 Baptists, 900 Quakers and between 2,600 and 3,500 Presbyterians and Independents.⁷ When bishops made enquiries, the returns were more impressionistic: in 1706 the parish of Buckingham contained 800 families, and 'some few Dissenters, who are Presbyterian and have a meeting house within the parish'.⁸ Between 1715 and 1718 the Dissenters' own census established the existence of 1,845 congregations and this in turn implies a total of 338,000 Dissenters out of a national population of 5.4 million.

The qualitative and quantitative sources that make the study of Dissent a very different enterprise from the study of earlier Puritanism have inevitably shaped the writing of its history, but so too have the motivations of historians. Nineteenth-century historians used church books and the writings of the Dissenting divines to lay the foundations of the denominational and institutional history of Dissent and to celebrate the heroism of the tradition. Twentieth-century scholars, preoccupied by the social and economic functions of religion, turned their attention to Puritanism's social history and sought to establish the geographical and social distribution of Dissenters so as to map their presence in towns, in commerce and among the 'middling sort'.

The current picture of Dissent is richer for all this preceding scholarship, but rather less clear-cut in its conclusions. We know that Dissenters tended to be concentrated in towns, in, for example, Exeter, Taunton, Norwich, Sheffield, Birmingham, Chester and Norwich: they may have formed 20 per cent of Bristol's population. But they were also to be found in rural areas such as Devon and Somerset, South Wales and East Anglia. Observers reported on the variety and distribution of the denominations. In 1669 the chapel at Colebrook, Buckinghamshire, had

a meeting every Wednesday of 'no less than one or two hundred persons and sometimes many more'. There were 'thirteen who preach there by turns as very formal lecturers. These go under the name of Presbyterian.' They included several ejected ministers, some of them coming from London, and took large collections from their hearers. Elsewhere in the parish there was a meeting of 30 Quakers. Nearby Olney had 40 Quakers and 200 Baptists who had met since the 1650s in a rented malthouse. They 'are of the lower and poor rank, most of them women and maids that get their living by making of bonelace. The men that frequent them are but a few and they likewise but of little esteem and name in the town.'⁹ Some communities boasted several congregations. The Cambridgeshire village of Over had Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists and visits from the prophet Ludowick Muggleton, while Bristol enjoyed 3 Independent churches, 2 Baptist, a Presbyterian and a Quaker congregation. Early eighteenth-century Luton had a population of 4,000 of whom 500 were Presbyterians, Quakers, but mainly Baptists 'of which there are two sorts' each with a meeting house.¹⁰

The associations between Dissent and specific social and economic groups remain elusive. Hostile commentators alleged that Dissenters were 'of the meaner sort, for the most part women, and young fellows'.¹¹ This was not true of congregations in, say, Bristol or London, which included small-scale merchants, retailers and artisans. Evidence from Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire indicates that Dissent drew members from all social ranks and tends to undermine earlier suggestions that the Quakers were a movement of the middling sort.¹² It is likely that, as many contemporaries believed, the gentry had fallen away from the Puritan cause during the century. The one incontrovertible generalisation is that women formed the majority in most congregations. Many women seem to have joined as individuals.¹³ While some denominations such as the Quakers exerted control over members' marriages and the Baptists frowned on 'a marrying out of the Lord or out of the Church', others clearly did not recruit husbands and wives or entire family units. As a fifteen-year-old apprentice in the late 1660s, Charles Doe heard the General Baptists while his father-in-law attended a Presbyterian meeting; Agnes Beaumont famously disobeyed her father to follow Bunyan and the Bedford Baptists; among the 140 families in Cardington, Bedfordshire in 1712, eighty were 'entirely conformable, thirty-two entirely Dissenters, the rest mixed'.¹⁴ It begins to look as though Dissent was often an individual choice made on religious grounds. The question then becomes, how did individuals decide which denomination to join?

In theory the options were clear. Presbyterian meetings were under the authority of trained and ordained ministers; they were open to those who lived respectably and professed the Christian faith; and they espoused the theology laid down in the Westminster Assembly Confession of Faith. There was, however, no lay eldership, nor any hierarchy of local and provincial synods – as had been set up in England in the 1640s or as was the case in Scotland – and some Presbyterians were not averse to hearing the preaching in their parish church. Independent or Congregationalist churches were ‘gathered churches’ or voluntary congregations of those who had given the church an account of their conversion experience. Their pastors were chosen by the church meeting and were assessed as much by their spiritual ‘gifts’ – principally the ability to preach and pray effectively – as by any formal education or qualifications. Each congregation was autonomous and the church meeting was the supreme authority. Independent churches tended to follow the Savoy Confession of Faith and its Calvinist theology. A very similar church structure characterised the Baptist movement, although the Baptists were divided into a Calvinist tradition (the Particular Baptists), an Arminian wing (the General Baptists), and a small group of mainly Calvinist Seventh-Day Baptist congregations. The Particular Baptists had their own confession of faith and practised ‘closed communion’, in other words they restricted full membership and communion to those who had received a believer’s baptism. So much for theory: in practice, however, denominational identities and boundaries were far from rigid, and religious choice was exercised within the parameters of what was available, safe and spiritually satisfying.

In the cities especially, some individuals promiscuously attended Baptist, Independent and Presbyterian meetings as ‘hearers’ of the preaching and prayers. However, admission to full communion with a congregation required a commitment. Applicants for full membership revealed their own spiritual history: in 1672 on joining the Bristol Broadmead church Richard Towne ‘gave an account of the change upon his soul, and how he came to be convinced of the damnable principles of the Quakers, having been one of them many years’, as did ‘Sister Pope, an aged widow, and professor with our friends called the Presbyterians’.¹⁵ Against this evidence of denominational identities, we must balance the fact that congregations, especially in the countryside, often came together almost opportunistically around a specific preacher or meeting place. In the 1670s several of the congregations in the Welsh borders ‘consisteth partly of Independents, and partly of Baptists’, others are mostly Independent, or free (open) communion Baptists; Mr Samuel

Jones has gathered a church, he is 'supposed to be a Presbyterian in judgment, but a godly, well-qualified, moderate person'.¹⁶ Churches would change character with time and under the influence of particular pastors. Bristol Broadmead, for instance, was an Independent congregation that gradually became Baptist, although for many years it practised 'open' communion, admitting both those baptised as children and those baptised as adult believers. A minister could give denominational form to the aspirations of a religious fellowship: this was clearly what happened to those groups formed out of a parochial congregation by ejected ministers. And when a minister moved on, his former flock might also re-evaluate their choices: in 1694 it was complained that since the Devon Presbyterian Mr Balster had left Ufculm, 'the people had laid down their Meeting, & went to hear the Anabaptists & Quakers'.¹⁷

The weight individuals gave to doctrinal principles and spiritual experience when deciding where and how to worship will always remain obscure. While it would be unwise to discount the formidable grasp of scripture and Bible-based theology attained by some Dissenters, it would also be rash to overlook the importance of godly fellowship in their considerations. Well might an Anglican minister sneer at the Bedford labourers who 'resort to the Independents' meeting house, but know little more of religion than that they do not like the Church of England, but think they edify more at a conventicle'.¹⁸ Yet spiritual edification was of paramount importance to Puritans, and they would find it wherever they could. As the apprentice Roger Lowe noted in his diary after a night of prayer with the godly, 'O how comfortable is the communion of saints!'¹⁹

Fellowship was also valued between ministers and congregations. Recommending members and pastors to other churches required correspondence and visits between sister churches. The Baptists and Quakers formalised their arrangements; others relied on fraternal goodwill, especially when it came to the training and ordination of ministers. There were cross-denominational ventures, such as the Pinners' Hall lecture, and discussions about closer cooperation between Presbyterians and Independents. However, the Toleration Act brought home the need for financial and institutional structures to perpetuate each denomination. Meeting houses had to be built and furnished, academies set up and staffed, statements of faith drawn up, pastors trained, and regional and national meetings established. Practicalities and ideals dictated closer cooperation between Presbyterians and Congregationalists (as the Independents had come to be known).

In July 1690 Presbyterians and Congregationalists established the Common Fund, a national kitty managed by lay and clerical representatives of both denominations to provide financial aid to ministers, churches and students for the ministry, and to centralise charitable donations.

The 'Happy Union' grew out of a general meeting of London Presbyterian and Congregational ministers at Stepney in 1691. The resulting *Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers in and about London: formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational* was a blueprint for cooperation between the two denominations without trespassing on congregational independence. The union was explicitly designed to preserve order in congregations, not to provide a national constitution. Scripture was to be the rule of faith, but congregations could follow the Savoy or Westminster Assembly confessions or even the doctrinal parts of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Communion between the congregations was allowed where it was possible. Here was a model that might be used across the country; it was speedily adopted by clerical assemblies in Cheshire, Somerset, Devon, Dorset and Gloucestershire.

Unhappily the Happy Union was a false dawn. At bottom the problem was twofold: the clerical leaders of Dissent were doctrinally divided; and the deeply rooted independence of pastors and congregations sat uneasily with any attempt to erect an overarching authority. The Happy Union began to unravel from the very start. When John Howe and other ministers apparently endorsed the republication of Tobias Crisp's antinomian works in 1690, the aged Baxter and his vigorous acolyte Daniel Williams immediately took up the controversy. This theological quarrel was exacerbated by the case of Richard Davis, an evangelical Congregationalist minister in Northamptonshire, who was accused of breaching the Union by sending out preachers to poach followers from existing congregations and of teaching antinomianism. Davis, who received support from the Common Fund, refused to cooperate with its enquiry, and when Williams attacked Davis in print six Congregational ministers seceded from the Union; in 1694 the Presbyterian clergy left the Pinners' Hall lecture and set up their own; in 1695 the Congregational ministers withdrew from the Common Fund and established a separate fund. Although the Union in London had collapsed, the provincial picture was less bleak. Some of the unions or clerical assemblies established in the 1690s continued to meet and those in Devon and Lancashire survived into the nineteenth century. In certain towns – Chesterfield or Leicester for example – Presbyterian and

Congregationalist meetings combined to build chapels and even met for worship.

One final episode reveals Dissent's limitations and presages the directions to be taken by eighteenth-century Puritanism. Although the tide of heterodox speculation that swept over later Stuart England would have horrified earlier Puritans, Dissenters were no less susceptible to new philosophical and critical ideas than their neighbours and in the 1710s they became caught up in the Trinitarian controversy. A provincial furore became a national test when the clergy and lay trustees of Exeter's Presbyterian meetings asked local ministers to state their position on the Trinity. The propriety of this request was referred to London's Dissenting ministers. In meetings at Salters' Hall in 1719 and 1720, the London ministers debated whether an individual could simply take a stand on scripture (which says virtually nothing about the Trinity) or whether he should subscribe to an interpretation that would necessarily be expressed in fallible human language. Their narrow decision in favour of the first option is often seen as an assertion of freedom of conscience and a rejection of ecclesiastical claims to enforce religious belief. Yet freedom has its price. Within decades the Presbyterians and General Baptists who had aligned themselves with that freedom would have moved decisively towards Unitarianism and Arminianism, while their Congregationalist and Particular Baptist adversaries remained orthodox Trinitarians and Calvinists. This theological fissure was to reshape Dissent as it entered the age of the Evangelical Revival.

DISSENT AND THE PERSISTENCE OF PURITANISM

The six decades separating the Restoration and Salters' Hall are too easily dismissed as the closing chapter of the great story of Puritanism. Yet looking back over the entire Puritan tradition from the vantage point of the early eighteenth century, it is clear that one hundred and fifty years of religious aspiration and struggle cannot be reduced to pat formulae: Puritanism is not reducible to Calvinist theology, Presbyterian discipline or separatist ecclesiology. It comprised all of these and more. Modern studies have revealed a variegated Puritanism before 1662. Puritanism was variously a polemical and literary construction, a projection of fears and hostility, a tendency within English Protestantism and a form of sociability and communal piety. None of these lessons should be lost on the historian of post-1662 Puritanism. The challenge is

to avoid capitulation to a single narrative and to recognise the variations on well-established themes.

So, for example, we must recognise the reality of Puritan theological development but also acknowledge the complexity of the process. The 'eclipse of Calvinism' is undeniable, but the Calvinism of Dordrecht and the Westminster Assembly had never monopolised Puritan thinking. The notion of 'Arminian' Puritanism is familiar in the shapes of Milton and Goodwin, and we are increasingly aware of the significant strain of 'antinomianism' running from John Eaton through the Civil War sects and up to the 1690s. 'Free grace' – that Lutheran legacy – was a common feature of many nonconformist conversion narratives; 'heart piety', the rapturous encounter with the divine, was another important ingredient in Puritan spirituality; and the pneumatic theology developed by John Howe among others spoke to many Dissenters. The famous 'middle way' enunciated by Calamy in 1703–5 was not only a revision of Reformed soteriology (Calamy apparently never 'troubled' his congregation with the doctrine of predestination), but also an acceptance of doctrinal diversity.²⁰

The goal of 'reformation' also mutated in interesting ways. The reformation of the national church was a Puritan dream if ever there was one, but it was not shared by all Puritans. And after 1662 the dream looked further away from realisation than ever. Comprehension was a necessary first step, and although repeatedly thwarted by Anglican intransigence and Dissenting divisions, it remained a powerful vision. Older Presbyterians had not abandoned hope in 1689. And their motives were impeccably pastoral: a comprehensive church was 'conducibile to the true interest of religion' because it strengthened the national parochial church. And that was important 'because those that most need instruction, will go to the public church if Turkism, Judaism, or Popery were introduced into it'.²¹ A Protestant catholicity was also at work among Presbyterians. Declining help from Independent ministers in 1694, Edmund Calamy and Thomas Reynolds explained that they wanted to be 'ordained ministers of the Catholic Church, without any confinement to particular flocks, or any one denomination' or the restriction of 'any narrow, confining, cramping notions'.²² Calamy may have seen the Church of England as just one more denomination, but this did not prevent him from listing its deficiencies in terms that would not have looked out of place at the Hampton Court Conference, nor from asserting that the Dissenters were pursuing an agenda which was 'the same among those of Puritanical stamp from the Reformation to this

day'.²³ Meanwhile Puritan reforming zeal was diverted inwards, into congregational discipline, and outwards into the cross-denominational Societies for the Reformation of Manners.

The old question of whether Puritans were marked out as distinct from their neighbours continued to be pertinent, and thanks to the legal definition, persecution and social exclusion of Dissenters after 1662 it can be explored in distinct ways. In some villages Dissenters were expected by their neighbours to take up their share of the burden of local offices; but does that really mean that the demands of neighbourliness could override denominational identities? This model of Dissent's social integration can be countered by village studies that trace entrenched divisions between the religious communities of conformists and Dissenters back to antithetical notions of the role of ritual in defining community.²⁴ Such local studies provide much-needed nuance. The parish of Halifax, for example, has been studied from several angles. The membership of its Independent congregation suggests the religious autonomy of individuals, especially women. Disputes over parochial appointments reveal antagonistic understandings of local rights and communal responsibilities among residents. National political labels and rhetoric have been shown to be readily adaptable to local circumstances, personalities and animosities, although in many humdrum tasks, such as administering the town school, Dissenters and Anglicans cooperated successfully.²⁵

This microscopic approach pays dividends when applied to the religious lives of Dissenters. It is here that we find a recognisable Puritanism in action. The London merchant and Independent George Boddington was troubled when his pastor began to admit to the communion anyone that he judged fit without hearing a formal account of their faith. Boddington's conscience told him to seek a new church. On 20 February 1678,

I having resolved to join in fellowship with a Church that I conceived walked most according to the practise of the churches planted by the apostles I propounded my self to Mr John Collins to be admitted into fellowship with the church of which he was pastor who on discourse with me of the hope I had that there was a work of grace in my heart propounded me to the church and the 28 of February [I] delivered him in writing the reasons of my hope[;] the 13 of March it was communicated to the whole church and approved, and after receiving a testimony of my conversation the 23 March I was received into full communion with them.²⁶

One man's troubles illuminate the role of individual conscience, but congregational actions disclose another side of Puritanism. Boddington joined John Collins's Independent church in Paved Alley, Lime Street. When Collins died, Daniel Williams received a call to succeed him as pastor, but twenty-six members of the church objected. Williams, who had 'often declared that he is for particular organised churches' and promised that he would 'not alter the practice of this church', was rejected by the church because 'we think a Presbyterian minister an unsuitable officer to a Congregational People'.²⁷ The point is not whether the church had judged Williams's position fairly but the sense of communal responsibility and authority they displayed. In the interplay of individual conscience and fellowship, doctrine and piety, respect for pastors and the stubborn independence of lay judgement, we can see Puritanism alive and well. And so could contemporaries. As Isaac Watts urged in 1731, 'let us not be ashamed to distinguish ourselves as the offspring of the Puritans, and as Protestant Dissenters, who have learned of our fathers to pay a religious reverence to all that is holy'.²⁸

Notes

1. Matthew Mead, *Comfort in Death* (London, 1698), p. 34; *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews (Oxford, 1934), p. 163.
2. J. Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 25-7.
3. Dr Williams's Library, Morrice Enttring Book Q 368, P 323.
4. D. L. Wykes, 'To Revive the Memory of Some Excellent Men': *Edmund Calamy and the Early Historians of Nonconformity* (London, 1997).
5. B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1983), p. 113.
6. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1697*, ed. W. J. Hardy (London, 1927), p. 467.
7. *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition*, ed. A. Whiteman (London, 1986); J. Hurwich, 'Dissent and Catholicism in English society: a study of Warwickshire, 1660-1720', *Journal of British Studies*, 16 (1976), 24-58.
8. *Buckinghamshire Dissent and Parish Life 1669-1712*, ed. J. Broad, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 28 ([Aylesbury], 1993), p. 77.
9. *Buckinghamshire Dissent*, ed. Broad, pp. 2-3, 54-5, 210.
10. *Episcopal Visitations in Bedfordshire, 1706-1720*, ed. P. Bell, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 81 ([Aylesbury], 2002), pp. 69-70.
11. *Buckinghamshire Dissent*, ed. Broad, p. 40.
12. B. Stevenson, 'Social integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters, 1660-1725', in M. Spufford, ed., *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1740* (Cambridge, 1995).
13. W. J. Sheils, 'Oliver Heywood and his congregation', *Studies in Church History*, 23 (1986), 261-77.

14. *Episcopal Visitations in Bedfordshire*, ed. Bell, p. 22.
15. *The Records of a Church of Christ Meeting in Broadmead Bristol (1640–1687)*, ed. E.B. Underhill (London, 1847), pp. 188, 165.
16. 'The Revd Henry Maurice's Shropshire Diary 1672', ed. J.V. Cox, *Shropshire Records* series 4 (Keele, 2000), pp. 31–51; G.H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales 1639–1689* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 62.
17. *The Exeter Assembly*, ed. A. Brockett, *Devon and Cornwall Record Society*, new series 6 (Torquay, 1963), p. 18.
18. *Episcopal Visitations in Bedfordshire*, ed. Bell, p. 76.
19. *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton in Makerfield, Lancashire 1663–1674*, ed. W.L. Sachse (London, 1938), p. 107.
20. See D.R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit. Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, CA, 2004); T. Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot, 2001); M. Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Late Stuart Dissent* (Carlisle, 2003); J. Spivey, 'Middle Way Men: Edmund Calamy and the Crisis of Moderate Nonconformity, 1688–1732' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1986).
21. Morrice Entering Book, Q 493, Q 648.
22. D.L. Wykes, 'Edmund Calamy (1671–1732)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
23. Spivey, 'Middle Way Men', pp. 145–6.
24. See Stevenson, 'Social integration'; D. Beaver, *Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester 1590–1690* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).
25. See Sheils, 'Heywood'; S.S. Thomas, 'Religious community in Revolutionary Halifax', *Northern History*, 40 (2003), 89–111; and J.C. Smail, 'Local politics in Restoration England', in M. McClendon, J.P. Ward and M. MacDonald, eds., *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society and Self-Fashioning in Post-Reformation England* (Stanford, CA, 1989).
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27. D.L. Wykes, 'Daniel Williams', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
28. Spivey, 'Middle Way Men', p. 295.

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6 Puritanism and the continental Reformed churches

ANTHONY MILTON

The Church of England has become renowned for its ambivalent relationship with the Reformed churches of the continent. Puritans have therefore traditionally been distinguished (by Antipuritans, at least) by the supposed intimacy of their relationship with the theology and liturgy of the continental Reformed churches. It is true, as we shall see, that they displayed an especial readiness to urge the example of the foreign churches in debates over church government and liturgy, to cultivate personal links with the foreign churches, to support distressed foreign Protestants by charitable donations, and to encourage military support for their co-religionists abroad in their struggles with the forces of international Roman Catholicism. But the Puritans' relationship with the continental Reformed churches was a complex and changing one, and was characterised as much by tension and ambiguity as by instinctive fraternalism, especially as English Puritanism itself fractured during the seventeenth century.

PURITAN POLEMICAL USE OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES

If the Church of England was only 'halfly reformed' as the Puritans claimed, then the continental Reformed churches inevitably provided the model of 'wholly reformed' churches. When the leaders of the Puritan movement sought to urge reform on the Church of England in parliament and print, they regularly cited the example of the continental Reformed churches and the publications of their most prominent divines. In the vestiarian controversy in 1566, Puritan appeals were directed to the works of Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr, John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger, and it was urged that vestments should be removed so that the Church of England would agree with 'the most excellent reformed churches of France, Germanie and Scotland'.¹ The Puritan *Admonition to the Parliament* (1572) famously demanded: 'Is a

reformation good for France? and can it be evyl for England? Is discipline meete for Scotland? and is it unprofitable for this Realme? Surely God hath set these examples before your eyes to encourage you to go foreward to a thorow and a speedy reformation'.² The continental churches and their relative fortunes under presbyterian government also loomed large in the debate between John Bridges and Walter Travers in the 1580s that formed part of the Admonition controversy. In the same decade Oxford's foremost Puritan theologian John Rainolds invoked the superior morality of the city of Geneva with its consistory courts when he chastised the sins of the city of Oxford.³

The collapse of the Elizabethan presbyterian movement did not put an end to explicit Puritan appeals to the model of the continental churches. One Puritan petition circulating in 1603 pleaded directly for the reform of the Church of England in a manner 'agreeable to the example of other reformed Churches, which hath restored both the Doctrine and Discipline, as it was delivered by our Saviour Christ and his holy Apostles'. The writings and examples of foreign divines and churches are also prominently invoked in the Lincoln ministers' objections to subscription in 1605.⁴ Demands 'that there may be a full Conformity in Doctrine, and Discipline, with the rest of the Protestant Churches of Scotland, [the] reformed Church of France, [and] Geneva' became deafening by the 1640s, and the Solemn League and Covenant bound its adherents to secure the reformation of religion according to 'the example of the best reformed Churches'.⁵ The Directory for Public Worship that emerged from the deliberations of the Westminster Assembly declared regretfully in its preface that the Book of Common Prayer 'hath proved an offence . . . to the reformed Churches abroad'. From the 1560s to the 1660s, the continental churches and their divines were thus a constant resource that Puritan writers would exploit when arguing for a presbyterian form of church government, consistorial discipline, a reformed liturgy and ceremonies, and for the more severe forms of doctrinal predestinarianism.

Nevertheless, the Puritans were not alone in acknowledging a degree of affiliation with the foreign Reformed churches. The pre-Laudian Church of England happily acknowledged its fellowship with its sister churches abroad. Its fundamental sense of shared identity with the continental Reformed churches was manifested in a whole range of official acts and writings, culminating in the attendance of Church of England divines at the Synod of Dort.⁶ Indeed, part of the point of Puritan appeals to the examples of the continental churches was precisely that their conformist opponents accepted the Church of

England's broad identity with the foreign Reformed churches. In fact, conformists often responded to Puritan attacks with their own citations of foreign Reformed opinion. Conformists made their own appeals to the writings and letters of Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger and Rudolph Gualter in the controversies of the 1560s, and to the authority of John Calvin in particular during the Admonition controversy. Similarly in the early 1640s they invoked the opinions of the contemporary Huguenot divines Pierre du Moulin and André Rivet, and the late Palatine theologian Abraham Scultetus. In both periods, tit-for-tat quotations from foreign divines were a feature of the controversy between Puritans and conformists.⁷ Of course, both sides' appeals in their pamphlets to continental churches and divines were often highly selective. Just as Church of England divines were highly discriminating in those features of the government and teaching of the foreign churches which they quoted, so Puritans conducted a selective raiding of features from continental Reformed Protestantism. After all, there was no simple doctrinal orthodoxy or unified form of church government observable even among the continental churches themselves.⁸

PURITAN INTERACTION WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES

The Puritan relationship with the continental Reformed churches was not, however, one merely of polemical convenience, but often reflected a more intimate sense of shared identity. Thus, when William Bradshaw rejected the conformist complaint that Puritans were urging 'foreign' practice upon the Church of England, he declared:

Touching the word *forreyne*, though indeed the things desired by us are in all Churches of other Countreyes fully reformed in doctrine with ours, yet those Churches being all the same household of faith that we are, they are not aptly called *forreyne* . . . all Churches and all members of the Church, in what Country so ever they be, are not to be accounted *Forreyners* one to another, because they are all Citizens of heaven, and we make all one family or body.⁹

This vision of an international 'true church' that transcended national boundaries was not merely an abstract extension of the familiar Puritan notion of the 'community of the godly'. It also reflected decades of close interaction and mutual influence with foreign divines and churches which may indeed have seemed less 'foreign' to Puritan consciences than the persecuting prelates of their own country. This intimacy

stretched back to the Marian period, when many of the prominent figures of early Elizabethan Puritanism had spent time in exile – in Frankfurt, Zurich, Strasburg, Basle, Wesel and Emden, but perhaps most formatively in Geneva, where William Whittingham and his party had created both an alternative liturgy and a revised, annotated translation of the Bible. It was to Geneva that Cartwright headed after his deprivation from his Cambridge professorship, where he taught in the Academy and even attended sessions of the Geneva Consistory ‘to see the order they kept and to profit from it’.¹⁰ The struggles of the Puritan movement in England sent many of its major leaders abroad – Cartwright spent time in Geneva (twice), the Channel Islands, Heidelberg and Antwerp (where Dudley Fenner was also based for a while), and Cartwright, Fenner, Henry Jacob and Hugh Broughton all served as ministers to the Merchant Adventurers in Middelburg. William Ames spent the last twenty-three years of his life in the Netherlands, the final eleven as professor at the University of Franeker, while the 1630s also saw the arrival in the Netherlands of Hugh Peter, John Davenport and Thomas Hooker, among others. Indeed, a significant proportion of the most prominent Puritan figures of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period spent some time in the Netherlands (even if they gained greater fame from later careers in New England), including virtually all the early separatists. While some Puritans fled into exile on the continent, others went voluntarily to study. The Dutch universities were the most attractive, and at the University of Leiden about 950 English-speaking students matriculated between 1575 and 1675.¹¹

The English churches that were established abroad usually worked closely with the established continental churches. This was especially true in the Netherlands, where at least twenty-five British Reformed churches were recognised by the Dutch magistrates, received financial support from them, and were forbidden to deviate from the practice of the Dutch Reformed church. The English church at Amsterdam was throughout its existence a member of the Dutch classis and the Synod of South Holland, while a general synod of the other British churches in the Netherlands in 1623 affirmed their close doctrinal and liturgical bonds with the Dutch Reformed church by declaring their acceptance of the canons of Dort and stipulating that they would only use the liturgy ‘which is in use in the churches of these United Provinces’.¹²

Even those Puritans who never went abroad often enjoyed close personal links with foreign Protestants in the shape of the so-called ‘stranger churches’ that served the foreign communities resident in England. The role that the Edwardian authorities had wished these

churches to serve as models for a Reformed Church of England was not intended to be repeated by Elizabeth's government. Nevertheless, the stranger churches still retained autonomous powers of discipline, they chose their own pastors and they could adopt what was to Puritan eyes a 'purer' church liturgy purged of the superstitious popish remnants that plagued the English church. This provided an obvious attraction for English Puritans. By 1573 the Dutch church in London was being warned about permitting Puritan nonconformists to attend its services. Even as late as the Jacobean period English members of the Dutch London congregation included the Puritan merchant and lord mayor of London Sir Thomas Middleton. Rather than just providing alternative venues for worship, the stranger churches also remained potent models for Puritan reforms of the church. As early as 1565, a suspended minister complained that the stranger churches were granted what was denied to the Puritans, while their example was urged in parliamentary debates over church reform in 1572. It is possible that Puritan congregations by this time were using material provided in the orders of the stranger churches, which (it was noted in parliament) were available in print. It was a natural extension of this surreptitious influence when in the 1640s the French and Dutch stranger churches published in English translation their forms of church government in order to further the reform of the Church of England.¹³ It was fitting, then, that the Westminster Assembly that was charged with these reforms included two members from the churches of the Channel Islands (those other examples of presbyterian church organisation that had awkwardly co-habited with the episcopal Church of England), one of whom (Jean de la Marche) was appointed to the French stranger church in May 1643 and presided over a colloquy of the French churches in England in the following year.¹⁴

The stranger churches also fostered Puritan links with continental divines and churches in other ways. Under Calvin's loyal lieutenant Nicolas des Gallars (who was probably appointed to London in order to cultivate those laymen who would emerge as the greatest patrons of English Puritans) the French stranger church kept Geneva closely briefed on events in the early 1560s, and the French stranger communities in London subsequently helped to convey Beza's letters to London Puritans. The Dutch London community later paid for the translation and printing of the Zeeland divine Willem Apollonius's refutation of the precepts of the Independents, which the classis of Walcheren forwarded to the Westminster Assembly in 1644.¹⁵

Another forum for interaction between the stranger churches and prominent London Puritans was the collections that were organised at

various times for the relief of foreign Protestants, from Geneva to the Palatinate. This was fund-raising that usually had the support of the authorities, but nevertheless Puritans were often those most prominently involved in their promotion. Puritans urged this practical support for foreign Protestants in precisely the internationalist religious language that we have already observed from the pen of William Bradshaw, and the same international religious convictions and Puritan connections are observable among significant members of the English officer corps who applied such ideas even more literally when fighting Habsburg forces on the continent in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods. Thus, where Thomas Gataker appealed for the defence of 'our brethren in foraine parts' and warned 'Neither let any man say; What is their affliction to us? . . . What is France or Germanie to England? For what was Jerusalem to Antioch? . . . What was Judah to Joseph?', so the Calvinist soldier Geoffrey Gates wrote of his determination to aid his fellow 'Israelites', while a succession of military commanders were closely related to prominent Puritans, made a point of protecting Puritan ministers who had fled England and sought Puritan advice on the legitimacy of their actions.¹⁶

For their part, foreign Reformed divines sometimes sought to intervene in English affairs to support the Puritans. Their aid was solicited directly in 1566 during the vestiarian controversy, when after the suspension of thirty-seven London clergy the Puritan Percival Wiburn was sent abroad with an apocalyptic account of the state of the Church of England in order to entreat the support of Beza in Geneva and of Bullinger and Gualter in Zurich, and managed to prompt a sympathetic response. The following year George Withers and John Bartlett crossed the Channel on a similar quest, but Beza merely advised patience while they managed to antagonise Bullinger. They also appealed to Frederick III of the Palatinate to intervene with Elizabeth. Frederick eventually instructed Hieronymus Zanchius to write a lengthy appeal to Elizabeth, in which he urged the removal of popish relics and the abandonment in particular of vestments which set a bad example to Germany. Perhaps fortunately for all concerned, the letter was forwarded first to the bishops, who decided that it would be politic not to present it to the monarch.¹⁷ The following year, letters written by Gualter and Beza in 1566, urging the bishops towards moderation on matters of ceremonial conformity, were appended to the *Admonition to Parliament*. Other forms of involuntary foreign aid were obtained when Thomas Norton translated Calvin's *Institutes* in 1561 and John Field translated Beza's notorious *De Triplici Episcopatu* as *The Judgement of a*

Most Reverend and Learned Man from beyond the Seas, Concerning a Threefold Order of Bishops in 1580.

Another long-running service to the Puritan cause was provided by those foreign printers who enabled Puritan works to escape the English censors. Separatist theologians were almost entirely dependent on overseas printers, and non-separatists such as Cartwright, Fenner, Jacob, Ames and Bradshaw almost equally so. It was the Netherlands that played host to the most important networks of printers, patrons and clandestine distributors of Puritan writings in the pre-Civil War period. In the 1630s it was Dutch printers who helped to give a voice to Puritan opposition to Archbishop Laud, most notably in the case of Willem Christiaensz van der Boxe, who initiated and financed English and Dutch versions of the works of Prynne, among others, so that (in his own words) he could 'make the Bishops crueltie knowne to all nations'.¹⁸ In the same decade, Puritans were defended by the Dutch clergy and secular authorities when they sought to resist Laud's attempts to enforce the use of the prayer book on English congregations in the Netherlands.¹⁹

The Puritan assault on episcopacy and 'idolatrous' ceremonies in the Westminster Assembly won similar foreign support. In the 1640s various Dutch regional synods voted days of prayer, relief collections and petitions to the States General in support of the Assembly's reform programme, and gave God thanks for the abolition of bishops from the Church of England. In 1643 the classes of Zeeland were happy to write a solicited letter of support to the Scots commissioners at the Westminster Assembly, which was swiftly translated into English and printed. In it they applauded how England was 'now freed of the Episcopall yoke, and purged from all the rites and dregs of Antichrist' and opposed 'idolatrous rites and ceremonies', specifically the use of organs, the surplice, images, feast days and the practice of kneeling at communion. A further remonstrance to the States of Zeeland in the same year from deputies of the Zeeland classes appealed for the destruction of the remnants of the popish religion 'in doctrine, Divine Worship and spirituall Government of the Church' in England and urged the secular authorities to support the true religion in England and not 'the Popish Faction' (i.e. the royalists). This was similarly translated and published, this time by explicit order of parliament.²⁰

The intellectual influence of the continental Reformed churches – especially that of Geneva – on Puritans extended of course far beyond opportunistic translations of their works or solicitations of their written support. In fact, while Puritans insisted that they were not 'Calvinists',

nevertheless they were doubtless partly responsible for the fact that Genevan theological works appear to have been vastly more popular and influential in England than in other Protestant countries, with ninety editions of Calvin's works and fifty-six of Beza's published in English by 1600.²¹ Nevertheless, English Puritans were not the passive vessels for foreign Reformers' ideas that their conformist opponents liked to depict. On the contrary, they developed some very distinctive inflections of Reformed theology which would in due course have an important influence in the continental Reformed churches themselves.

PURITAN INFLUENCE ON THE CONTINENTAL REFORMED

We have already noted how Puritans displayed an enhanced level of financial and military support for the continental churches. The traffic of religious influence also worked in both ways. In matters of church government, English Puritans were not simply passive recipients of continental models, but made their own decisive contribution to the development of presbyterian orthodoxy in what was a European-wide drive in the early 1570s. The struggles of Elizabethan Puritans with bishops and an unreformed church structure led them to draw up the first theoretical endorsement for a presbyterian programme that would combine the principles of ministerial inequality, the requirement of consistorial discipline and the absolute necessity of a hierarchy of synods. Cartwright made a significant contribution to the case for the biblical foundations of the presbyterian-synodal form, and while it was Beza who formalised the case for presbyterianism it is clear that it was the events in England (and Scotland) that helped to clarify his own views.²² English Puritans also helped to provoke a wider European debate when George Withers, an English student at Heidelberg, argued the necessity of a consistory with full disciplinary powers in disputation with Thomas Erastus. The subsequent dispute between Erastus and his opponents prompted the introduction of a new church order along presbyterian lines in the Palatinate and Gualther's complaint that Withers and Bartlett were 'the chief authors of those changes in the Palatinate, which have inflicted such a blow upon the churches in that quarter'. The contributions of Beza and Erastus to the dispute were not published until 1589–90 – once again in response to events in England.²³

In doctrinal matters among the continental Reformed churches Puritan intervention could also be significant. It was William Perkins's works that provoked Arminius to write his most important treatise on

the doctrine of predestination, the *Examen Modestum*, as an explicit refutation, and in the Netherlands the Puritans William Ames and Matthew Slade made their own contributions to keeping the Arminian controversy on the boil through their own writings, and in prompting English intervention. The predestinarian teachings of Perkins and William Whitaker were also invoked at the Synod of Dort by Arminius's nemesis Franciscus Gomarus.²⁴ Gomarus may have encountered such figures in Cambridge, but their theological works and those of other prolific Puritan divines such as Andrew Willet were readily available on the continent in translation. Nevertheless, while Perkins's works were remarkably popular in several countries, the real continent-wide English best-seller was Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, which went through at least forty-nine Dutch printings, twenty-eight German editions, twenty French printings, and was also translated into Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Romansch and Swedish.²⁵

It was Puritan practical divinity that was readily identified by contemporaries as a distinctive development within the Reformed tradition, and that foreign divines sought most urgently to disseminate among the continental churches. In the 1630s the international Protestant irenicist John Dury struggled to find ways of making English practical divinity available to foreign Protestants. He and his friend Samuel Hartlib pondered the desirability of creating for foreign consumption a complete body of Puritan 'practical theology' combined with a complete 'body of case-divinity'. Philip Nye warned Hartlib that there were daunting problems in the translation of English practical divinity, and felt that 'the preaching eloquence of English divines is very hard to bee exprest. For they have made a new language as it were, using new Termes and a new phraseology', so that a new lexicon was required. Dury considered whether financial inducements might help. It had been reported that William Ames had been offered a thousand guilders to write books – Dury wondered whether 'this course might still be practised, and so Angli might be encouraged to write in Latin'. Dury arranged for a petition to be sent by churchmen of Hanau and Herborn (including the ex-Dort delegate Paulus Tossanus) to English divines in 1633 begging them to embark upon this proposed complete body of English Puritan practical divinity, and a number of London Puritans – including William Gouge, Henry Burton, George Walker, Sidrach Simpson and Obadiah Sedgwick – expressed a willingness in principle to respond, although they begged the advice and direction of James Ussher.²⁶

In the event this complete body of practical divinity never appeared, but foreign divines instead ensured that English practical divinity was

industriously disseminated abroad in individual translated editions. The numbers of such editions are truly remarkable. In the Netherlands alone there were 114 editions of 60 translations of works of English practical divinity published between 1598 and 1622, and a further 580 editions of 260 new translations in the rest of the seventeenth century.²⁷ This reflected a systematic attempt by groups of foreign Reformed scholars to ground themselves thoroughly in the English language, the better to understand Puritan divinity. The Dutch divine Gisbertus Voetius commented that 'besides our Dutch scholars, French, Hungarians, Transylvanians, Germans, and Swiss have upheld the standard of this [practical] theology in books translated from English, for which purpose Hungarian, Transylvanian, Dutch, German and Swiss students, both at home and in England, have studied the English language and examined English books'.²⁸ Voetius himself learned to read English and translated Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, and also integrated detailed analysis of English theological controversies into his voluminous works. The auction catalogue of his library includes 300 works by English Puritans, 270 of them in the English language.²⁹

Foreign enthusiasm for English Puritans' practical divinity ushered in an extraordinary period of intensive use of materials in the English language by Dutch divines in particular, and in some quarters an apparent expectation that foreign scholars should have mastered the English tongue. In the 1650s, for instance, we can discover the remarkable (and hitherto perhaps unparalleled) phenomenon of quotations in the English language embedded within paragraphs of Latin text, in Latin works published on the continent by non-English authors for a continental readership. This may be found in Johannes Hoornbeeck's *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* and Gisbertus Voetius's *Selectarum Disputationum Theologicarum*.³⁰ English practical divinity clearly provided a vital stimulus to the Dutch 'further reformation' (*nadere reformatie*) – the movement to reform personal and public piety manifested in the works and actions of divines such as Voetius, Willem Teellinck, Gottfried Udemans and Jacobus Koelman. It is noteworthy that, even when this Dutch movement was at its height in the period 1640–60, and native Dutch writings in the genre of practical divinity were most available, these peak years coincided with the highest numbers of Dutch translations of English Puritan writings.³¹

The English Puritan influence did not work simply through the printed page. The English universities were arenas where Puritan ideas could influence visiting students who included Johannes Bogerman and

Franciscus Gomarus.³² Household 'academies' run by celebrated Puritan divines offered another forum for instruction. A flock of continental trainee ministers – especially Dutch – received instruction in the household seminary run by the Puritan Thomas Gataker (a friend of Willem Teellinck, the celebrated pioneer of the Dutch *nadere reformatie*) in Surrey.³³ Another English Puritan in the 1630s advised Hartlib candidly that 'the best way to bring Practicall Divinity into forraine churches is to traine up yong divines in our country, where they may learne language and see the practise of religion in public and privat duties', and promised to work to ensure that visiting foreign scholars 'may bee maintained in ministers houses'.³⁴ The results of this instruction may be seen not just in the Dutch *nadere reformatie*, but in the emergence of what contemporary opponents and supporters alike dubbed 'Puritanism' in Hungary. More than a hundred Hungarian Reformed students travelled to England in the first half of the seventeenth century, and it was in London that a number of them drew up a 'League of Piety' in 1638 in which they committed themselves to secure the spiritual renewal of their native church and the removal of its existing hierarchical structures of clerical authority.³⁵

The Hungarian experience alerts us to the fact that contact with English Puritans could not only reassure foreigners of the existence of Reformed tendencies in England, or inspire them to cultivate an intense personal piety, but also make them aware of the deficiencies in their own churches. This, of course, brought its own problems.³⁶

TENSIONS BETWEEN PURITANS AND THE REFORMED CHURCHES

There were tensions and ambiguities in Puritan relations with the foreign Reformed churches. The foreign Reformed were not always anxious to emphasise their links with and support for the potentially disruptive Puritans, which could endanger their relations with the English church and government, but just as importantly could spread disruptive ideas in their own countries. Bullinger was increasingly unsympathetic to dissenting English Puritans in the 1560s, and while Theodore Beza was more favourably disposed even he deplored the 'very indiscreet' *Admonition to Parliament*.³⁷ The stranger churches in England always trod very carefully in any matters with political implications. When the Norwich stranger churches rushed to assure Archbishop Laud in the 1630s that they did not harbour factious Puritans as members of their community they were only manifesting in

overt form the stranger churches' anxieties to placate the Church of England's authorities that are evident throughout the period.³⁸

Of course, foreign Reformed groups were instinctively sympathetic towards the labours of the Westminster Assembly, and the Assembly was equally eager to solicit their overt support and endorsement through an active international correspondence.³⁹ Foreign governments sought – not always successfully – to discourage their church assemblies from conducting a correspondence in this fashion while the Civil War was still raging.⁴⁰ The execution of Charles I further problematised relations, especially for those Reformed churches anxious to prove their loyalty to their own monarch, most notably the French Huguenots. While Moïse Amyraut sought to avoid tarring all Puritans with republicanism by blaming anti-monarchical ideas on the 'Independents' alone, Claude de Saumaise's more influential *Defensio Regia* placed the blame squarely and explicitly on 'Puritans', and traced their evil influence back to the early years of Elizabeth's reign.⁴¹

The same equation of English Puritanism with sectarian anarchy and king-killing was made in Hungary. Here the church endured some two decades of bitter controversy as the signatories of the 'League of Piety' and their friends and allies – especially inspired by the teaching of Ames at Franeker as well as by their trips to England and their reading of English texts – demanded the reform of church government and ceremonies, with the abolition of the church hierarchy and introduction of a Presbyterian system of church government. Hungarian Presbyterians were condemned as crypto-'Independents', even by the Dutch divine Samuel Maresius, who warned the Hungarian church to avoid 'English simplicity' and the 'English fever' of Independents and Brownists. The failed attempt to introduce Presbyterianism in Hungary undoubtedly reflected long-running internal debates within the Hungarian Reformed church, but it also seems clear that the fortunes of English Puritanism provided both an inspiration for church reform and an unhelpful warning against it.⁴²

The emergence of separatism within English Puritanism also disrupted relations with other continental churches. In the short term, of course, it actually strengthened the support which one side of the internecine conflict – the English Presbyterians – received from foreign divines and churches. Divines such as Apollonius (commissioned by the classis of Walcheren) and Friedrich Spanheim (endorsed by the theology faculty of Leiden) wrote treatises in support of the English Presbyterians that were printed in London in 1645. In these works they condemned Independent positions on a range of issues from church membership and

church covenants to the use of set forms of worship and the legitimacy of Presbyterian classes and synods.⁴³ Similarly, Johannes Hoornbeeck devoted more than a hundred pages of his magnum opus *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* to a section on 'Brownists' (after dispatching Socinianism and the Remonstrants in a mere thirty-six pages).⁴⁴ But in the long term the triumph of Independency in England inevitably weakened some of the bonds that linked English Puritans – especially those of a non-Presbyterian disposition – with the foreign Reformed churches, although prominent divines of the *nadere reformatie* such as Voetius sought to sidestep explicit attacks on congregationalism.⁴⁵

English Independency in itself partly derived from continental roots. The authors of the *Apologeticall Narration* – Goodwin, Nye, Simpson, Bridge and Burroughes – based their position on their experience as ministers in Rotterdam and Arnhem in the late 1630s. But English separatism had long been a thorn in the flesh of the continental churches. In the Netherlands, for example, the English separatist communities had endured decidedly ill-tempered relations with the Dutch churches and secular authorities. They placed significantly less emphasis than the English Presbyterians did on the bonds of international Calvinism: they rejected the authority and orthodoxy of the Dutch Reformed Church, and excommunicated members who attended the Dutch Reformed services. Some of their other practices – most notably their highly simplified liturgy, stricter standards of baptism and church membership, millenarian doctrine and use of church covenants – were increasingly adopted by the supposedly more established English churches in the Netherlands in the 1630s, whose worship increasingly differed as much from Dutch as from English practice. Moreover, apart from the church at Amsterdam there had always been a strong congregationalist tendency among the English churches in the Netherlands, which did not follow the Reformed practice of participation in classes and synods, even if they sought the protection of Dutch magistrates and invoked their obligations to follow Dutch Reformed practice when threatened by Laud.⁴⁶ The spread of separatist groups in England in the 1640s and 1650s also posed a threat to the stranger churches. There was a significant leakage to separatist sects of members of the Dutch stranger churches in London, Great Yarmouth, Colchester and Norwich in this period. By 1659 the Dutch church in Colchester was pining for the restoration of good government and discipline in the Church 'as in the time of the Bishops'.⁴⁷

If foreign Reformed divines were often less than enthusiastic about English congregationalism, it should also be emphasised that although

English Puritans' practical divinity was disseminated throughout Europe not all of its aspects were equally popular. There appears to have been less interest in experimental predestinarianism outside the Netherlands, and even here it was far more influential in Zeeland than elsewhere in the Dutch Republic. The *nadere reformatie* was a powerful movement, but by no means an all-embracing one. While English Puritan writings had a significant impact in Hungary they made relatively little impression in France. While there were ninety-three editions of Perkins's works published in the Netherlands, and thirty-five in German, there were only five French editions.⁴⁸ Huguenot piety would appear to have centred more on participation in collective church services rather than an intensive round of private devotional practice and self-examination in the Puritan mould.⁴⁹ The rigours of Puritan sabbatarianism also often put English Puritans on a collision course with the foreign Reformed. William Ames encountered severe difficulties when he sought to impose sabbatarian discipline in Franeker by preventing the buying, selling and delivery of goods at the university on the Lord's Day, while in London Dutch merchants' habit of feasting and doing business on Sundays offended local Puritans.⁵⁰ There was undoubtedly a strong appetite for English practical divinity in some quarters on the continent, then, but this was not the same as a wholesale and uncritical endorsement of all the preoccupations of English Puritanism.

English Puritans were more than happy to emphasise their special bond with the Reformed churches of the continent, and this sense of membership of an international Reformed community was an important feature of their self-identity. But this was always a selective relationship, on both sides. It seems clear that, ultimately, English Puritanism appealed most in communities such as those in Hungary and the Netherlands where a doctrinally Reformed settlement could be perceived as having failed to transform church and society, impeded either by conservative liturgical and ecclesiastical structures or by intrusive and secular-minded lay authorities respectively.⁵¹ English Puritans' closest relationships would thus seem to have been formed, not with the continental Reformed churches themselves, but with reforming elements within them.

Notes

1. *An Answer for the Tyme* (1566); *The Fortresse of Fathers* (1566); *A Briefe Discourse* (1566); *The Iudgement of the Reverend Father Master Henry Bullinger* (1566).

2. *Puritan Manifestoes*, ed. W.H. Frere and C.E. Douglas (London, 1954), p. 19 – see also pp. 28, 39.
3. Walter Travers, *A Defence of the Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1588), pp. 9, 20–7, 67, 69–70, 105–6, 113–28, 134; C.M. Dent, *Puritan Reformers in Elizabethan Oxford* (Oxford, 1983), p. 182.
4. *The Answer of the Vicechancelour . . . and Other the Heads of Houses in the Universitie of Oxford* (Oxford, 1604), sig. B2r–v; *An Abridgment of that Booke* (1605), pp. 50–1 (see also pp. 5, 20–2, 27–8, 32–3, 35, 37–9, 40–1, 44, 46–7, 48–9, 54, 56–7, 58, 63–7 and *passim*).
5. E.g. *A Short View of the Praelaticall Church of England* (1641), pp. 8, 10, 20, 27, 30, 43; *An Appeale . . . whether the Presbyterie or Prelacie be the Better Church-Government* (1641), pp. 12–13; *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625–1660*, ed. S.R. Gardiner, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1906), p. 268.
6. A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 377–418; *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort* (1618–19), ed. A. Milton, Church of England Record Society, 13 (Woodbridge, 2005).
7. E.g. *A Briefe Examination for the Tyme* (1566); *An Answer for the Tyme* (1566); P. Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans!* (London, 1988), p. 26; Joseph Hall, *A Defence of the Humble Remonstrance* (1641), pp. 167–88; Smectymnuus, *A Vindication of the Answer to the Humble Remonstrance* (1641), pp. 218–19; Hall, *A Short Answer to the Tedious Vindication of Smectymnuus* (1641), sig. a2r, 100. See also King Charles I, *A Large Declaration* (1639), pp. 4, 75. See also the discussions of the opinion of the Dutch divine Voetius in *The Petition for the Prelates briefly examined* (1641), pp. 3, 28; Hall, *Defence*, pp. 165–6.
8. See P. Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 282–7, 451–9.
9. William Bradshaw, *A Myld and Just Defence* (1606), p. 5.
10. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), p. 110.
11. K.L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism* (Leiden, 1982), pp. 8–9.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–122, 295–6, 319, 368–72.
13. P. Collinson, *Godly People* (London, 1982), pp. 253–4, 256–7, 261, 264–5; O.P. Grell, 'From uniformity to tolerance: the effects on the Dutch Church in London of reverse patterns in English Church policy from 1634 to 1647', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 66 (1986), 30; O.P. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 47–53, 239.
14. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, art. 'Jean de la Marche'. I am grateful to Chad van Dixhoorn for this reference.
15. Collinson, *Godly People*, pp. 249–52; O.P. Grell, 'A friendship turned sour: Puritans and Dutch Calvinists in East Anglia', in E.S. Leedham-Green, ed., *Religious Dissent in East Anglia* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 66.
16. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 179–85, 195–6, 199–200, 208–10; P. Collinson, 'England and international Calvinism', in M. Prestwich, ed., *International Calvinism 1541–1715* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 203–10;

- Thomas Gataker, *A Sparke toward the Kindling of Sorrow for Sion* (1621), p. 33; D. Trim, 'Calvinist internationalism and the English officer corps, 1562–1642', *History Compass*, 4/6 (2006), 1024–48.
17. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 79–82; M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 204–8; G. Murdock, *Beyond Calvin* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 115–17; *Zurich Letters*, II. 339–53, 358–62; *The Remains of Edmund Grindal*, ed. W. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1843), pp. 333–42.
 18. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, pp. 306–18; K. L. Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands 1600–1640* (Leiden, 1994), esp. pp. 145–55.
 19. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, pp. 147–52, 301–4, 369–71.
 20. *A Letter from the Synod of Zeland* (1643), pp. 3, 5; *A Remonstrance presented to . . . the States of Zeeland* (1643), pp. 5, 8; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, p. 364; W. Nijenhuis, 'A disputed letter: relations between the Church of Scotland and the Reformed Church in the province of Zeeland in the year of the Solemn League and Covenant', in J. Kirk, ed., *Humanism and Reform* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 242–7.
 21. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 396, 407–8; C. D. Cremeans, *The Reception of Calvinistic Thought in England* (Urbana, 1949), p. 65; A. Pettegree, 'The spread of Calvin's thought', in D. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 210–11.
 22. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, pp. 249–50, 282–3; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 109–16.
 23. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, pp. 214–15, 247, 253; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 110–11.
 24. W. Nijenhuis, *Matthew Slade 1569–1628: Letters to the English Ambassador* (Leiden, 1986); K. L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 45–58; *The British Delegation*, ed. Milton, p. 225.
 25. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 400; C. W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind* (Leiden, 1983); M. A. Shaaber, *Check-list of Works of British Authors Published Abroad* (New York, 1975); Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, p. 522.
 26. Sheffield University Library, Hartlib MS 29/2, fol. 20v–21r, 29/3, fols. 19r, 24v, 50r–51r; John Dury, *The Earnest Breathings of Foreign Protestants . . . for a Compleat Body of Practicall Divinity* (1658), sig. a4r–v, 47–8.
 27. W. J. op 't Hof, *Engelse Pietistische Geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598–1622* (Rotterdam, 1987), pp. 626–7, 645.
 28. Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectarum Disputationum Theologicarum*, 5 vols. (Utrecht, 1648–69), III. 11; *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. J. W. Beardslee (New York, 1965), p. 275.
 29. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, p. 332; Voetius, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1663–76); op 't Hof, *Engelse*, p. 585.
 30. Johannis Hooftbeeck, *Summa Controversiarum Religionis* (Utrecht, 1653), p. 621; Voetius, *Selectarum*, III. 1237.

31. op 't Hof, *Engelse*, pp. 635, 646. For some cautionary words on the relationship between English Puritanism and the *nadere reformatie* see J.R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith* (New York, 1991), pp. 383–400.
32. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 420, 422.
33. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 58–9; Grell, 'Friendship', p. 56. Teellinck had lived for some time in England, and was married to an Englishwoman.
34. Sheffield University Library, Hartlib MS 29/3 fol. 55v.
35. G. Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600–1660* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 49–51, 68, 172–3.
36. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, pp. 359–60; Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, pp. 44–5.
37. D. MacCulloch, 'Heinrich Bullinger and the English-speaking world', in E. Campi, ed., *Heinrich Bullinger (1505–1575): Leben, Denken, Wirkung* (Zurich, 2006), pp. 927–31; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 79–82, 121.
38. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 236, 244, 250 and passim.
39. This correspondence has not hitherto received scholarly attention. Chad van Dixhoorn and Fred van Lieburg are currently planning an important study of surviving materials.
40. Nijenhuis, 'Disputed letter', pp. 241–2, 243–4, 247–9.
41. Moïse Amyraut, *Discours de la Souveraineté des Roys* (Paris, 1650), pp. 3, 104 and passim; Claude de Saumaise, *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I* (Paris, 1649), ch. 10, pp. 557–64 and passim.
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44. Hoombeeck, *Summa*, pp. 619–725.
45. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, pp. 367–8.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–34, 53, 57–8, 63, 305, 325, 329–40, 347–8, 369.
47. Grell, 'From uniformity', 31–8; Grell, 'Friendship', 45, 64–7.
48. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, p. 523.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 524–5; P. Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots, 1600–85* (Aldershot, 2001), ch. 6.
50. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 76–7; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pp. 410–12; Sprunger, *Ames*, p. 86; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, pp. 327–9.
51. Benedict, *Christ's Churches*, pp. 359–60.

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7 The Puritan experiment in New England, 1630–1660

FRANCIS J. BREMER

In March of 1630, John Winthrop preached a lay sermon to the men, women and children who were gathered in Southampton to accompany him on a voyage to America, an errand into the wilderness where they planned to erect a new England.¹ These emigrants were Puritans, departing England because of their belief that the assault on godliness being mounted by the king's bishops would only increase in vehemence. They had decided to uproot themselves and their families in order to found a colony where they could not only preserve the religious reforms they had managed to achieve in their native land, but also further advance the purification of worship and belief. This was not the only plan for Puritan colonisation, nor the best supported, which explains how a modest Suffolk landowner and justice of the peace could emerge as its leader. Providence Island for one, with its lists of investors that reads like a 'Who's Who' of the future Long Parliament, had more cachet. But it would be New England that would achieve the greatest success.

In his sermon, later labelled 'A Model of Christian Charity', Winthrop reminded them of the social gospel they had heard many times before. They were, in the New World, to be knit together as one community, to 'partake of each other's strength and infirmity, joy and sorrow, weal and woe'. 'The care of the public must overshadow all private respects.' They were entering into a covenant with God in which they pledged themselves 'to improve our lives' and 'to do more service to the Lord'. If they lived up to their obligations, 'the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us as his own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth than formerly we have been acquainted with', and they would become 'as a city upon a hill'.²

Yet Winthrop did not lay out a blueprint to be followed in erecting that community beyond saying that 'whatsoever we did or ought to have done when we lived in England, the same must we do and more also

where we go'. As a result, the first decades of settlement were characterised by an ongoing dialogue over the shape that the colony's institutions should take. Defining a community was a challenge for the colonists. They came from different regions of England, where their particular experience had led to variations on the Puritan theme. Winthrop and those who migrated from England's Stour Valley came from an area where for a time there had indeed been a 'godly kingdom' where discussions among the godly were welcomed as aids to further understanding, where Puritan magistrates and ministers had a history of cooperating in their efforts to better understand and implement God's will and where the eventual persuasion of non-Puritan neighbours was seen as inevitable. In other parts of England, such as the region surrounding Anne Hutchinson's Alford, Puritans were a reviled minority who gathered together in a 'holy huddle' and sought to distance themselves from their ungodly neighbours by sharply defining behaviours and beliefs that they found intolerable. London, with its growing population and many parishes, offered a cornucopia of various forms of Puritanism. The challenge facing the leadership of New England was how to form a single community from these different ingredients, a challenge magnified as each new influx of immigrants came from an England that was itself changing, and in which English Puritans had become more radicalised.³

POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS

The foundation for the political shape of Massachusetts was the charter that had been granted to the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629. That document granted control over the colony to the body of investors (freemen) who met regularly in a General Court to approve policies and who annually chose a Governor and his Assistants to govern the colony between meetings of the Court. In a decision of tremendous significance, a group of the leading investors meeting at Cambridge University agreed to move to New England themselves if the General Court allowed them to take the charter with them. The Court approved the measure and so the operational centre of the company was transferred to America, transforming the process of governing a corporation to that for governing a colony.⁴

Because few freemen (and all of them Assistants) had migrated to the colony, that small handful could theoretically have kept power in their own hands, but, urged by Winthrop, freemanship was soon expanded, with all adult males eligible to seek the franchise. A few years later

eligibility was narrowed to those who were church members. The Assistants who had approved these measures had, however, sought to retain the authority that they held on their arrival by allowing the freemen to elect colony officials but denying them the other powers which the charter vested in the General Court. Discovering this, the freemen demanded to exercise their share in the governance of the colony. As the population grew, the freemen of the towns adopted the practice of sending deputies to the sessions of the General Court rather than attending in person. Later the General Court divided into two bodies – Assistants and Deputies – which in effect gave Massachusetts a bicameral legislative body.

While the forms of legislative structure were evolving, the actual process of government was being carried out by the Governor and Assistants, which as a body (the Court of Assistants) purposely functioned as an English country commission of the peace. An effort was made to ensure that each local community had a resident Assistant and each Assistant took an oath as a justice of the peace and had jurisdiction over minor offences in his town. More serious offences were brought before the quarter sessions of the full court. Like its English counterpart, this body also performed administrative functions, such as licensing alehouses and ferries, regulating the local militia, appointing constables and assessing rates for colony defence and other common needs.⁵

Winthrop's evocation of the biblical model of 'a city upon a hill' did not anticipate that the colonists would all live together in a single community. The expectation of large numbers and the need for agricultural production would have made any such plan foolish. In fact, the colony gradually expanded as the government allocated land to groups of immigrants intending to settle in separate communities. In some English towns, most notably in Essex, parish open vestries had adopted principles for their godly government, and that pattern was adopted in New England. In these newly settled towns the colonists covenanted together and gathered in town meetings where they allocated individual land holdings, designated common lands and regulated their own affairs, including the election of local selectmen and other officers. The colony required that heads of household educate their children, and soon towns would fund schools to further deter the work of 'that old deluder, Satan'. In 1636 Harvard College was founded to crown this educational system.⁶

This evolution of civil government principally involved the application to New World circumstances of parts of the colonists'

English heritage that were not specifically Puritan. But this is not to deny that there was a connection. English Puritans had traditionally been opposed to the church policies of monarchs and bishops and had been forced to rely on associations of saints to steer them towards godly belief and practice. This willingness to trust fellow saints provided an experiential background that made colonial leaders willing to allow middle-class farmers and artisans to elect colony and town officials, and then to share with those leaders the responsibilities of government. Furthermore, the expectation that all would labour together for the common good owed something to the blend of religious faith and commonwealth principles.⁷

RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS

Puritanism had a more direct influence on the shaping of religious life in New England. A pattern of godly association lay at the heart of the Puritan experience in England. Even in the days before the English Reformation, students and fellows committed to reform had a tradition of joining together in Cambridge and Oxford colleges or other local venues for prayer and discussion of the changes needed in the church. Prophesyings in the early Elizabethan period brought together godly preachers (and occasionally laymen) to learn from discussions of scripture. When Queen Elizabeth had ordered an end to the prophesyings, conferences (most famously that at Dedham) had provided opportunities for godly clergy to join together in an effort to develop a common approach to the problems they faced in their congregations as well as to seek agreement on matters such as the proper observance of the Sabbath. Combination lectureships were occasions that provided an opportunity for godly ministers to listen to a peer preach and then discuss matters of faith over dinner. Laymen likewise organised groups to debate matters of faith and morals. The purpose of all these mechanisms was to advance to a better understanding of the truth through sharing and discussion. They were essentially congregational rather than hierarchical, though some groups were clearly more hospitable to open expression of views than others.⁸

This pattern of association was responsible for the formation of the churches of New England. Drawing on this as well as on precedents developed elsewhere (such as in the Plymouth Colony), the colonists moved to organise their religious life. Later arrivals such as Thomas Hooker (1633), John Davenport (1637) and Hugh Peter (1635) who had experience ministering to English churches in the Netherlands added

their insights into the process. As the system developed, typically a gathering of townsmen would identify those among them who were of such godliness that they could serve as foundation stones (or pillars) of the new church. These then drafted a church covenant to which others who sought membership would swear. Initially, admittance was extended to all who had an understanding of the faith and led an upright life. Once the original membership was established, the members chose their spiritual officers and empowered them through a laying on of hands. Ideally a congregation would have two ministers, a pastor to preach on how to regulate one's life, and a teacher to expound on doctrine, though that distinction was rarely a rigid one.⁹

Each congregation was considered an independent entity, free to make its own decisions without the approval of any supervisory body. The challenge was how to prevent this resulting in religious anarchy, with different congregations going off in different directions. An important factor was the respect accorded the ministers. The men chosen to be pastors and teachers were those whom the laity believed were especially suited to interpret God's will by virtue of their educational training and personal piety. One clergyman claimed that New England's system was one of 'a speaking aristocracy' and 'a silent democracy', and in most churches, while the congregation's role in governance was taken seriously, the opinions of the clergy were generally followed. The critical issue, therefore, was keeping the clergy on the same page, and the tradition of clerical conferencing helped to keep the churches of New England united if not uniform. From the start of the colony, ministers gathered in informal meetings where they discussed the issues facing the new churches and strove for symmetry. While some of the colonists expressed concerns that this represented a drift towards presbyterianism, the practice continued.¹⁰

One product of these discussions was the development of a form of worship that pushed the reform of English liturgy to the point where it was hardly recognisable. Services were held in bare-walled meeting houses that were in no sense considered consecrated places and that, indeed, were also the sites for town meetings. A simple pulpit, a table that could be used for communion and seating for those in attendance were the only furnishings. In England the colonists had used the required forms of the Book of Common Prayer (though some parts were often silently omitted), but in New England there was no prayer book or set prayers. Sabbath services typically opened with an original prayer of about a quarter-hour in length. Next the pastor would read and expound on a chapter of scripture. This was followed by congregational

psalm-singing and then a sermon.¹¹ In at least some churches members of the congregation were initially allowed to ask questions for clarification of the message, or even to offer their own testimony.¹² A prayer and a blessing would conclude the normal service. In the afternoon the congregation would gather again for a similar service, again centred on a sermon. All members of the community were expected to attend these services, whether members of the congregation or not. On certain occasions, either before a minister had been selected or when he might be absent, a layman such as John Winthrop occasionally preached 'by way of prophesy'.

Once a month the morning service would end with the Lord's Supper. One of the ministers would pray and bless the bread and wine, which would then be distributed to the members of the congregation. A prayer would end the service. Baptisms were conducted by sprinkling or washing as necessary at the conclusion of the afternoon service. One of the parents had to be a church member, and no godparents were required.

DISSENT AND ITS TREATMENT

For each congregation individually, and for the churches of Massachusetts as a whole, one of the tasks of the 1630s was the need to establish what Alexandra Walsham has called the 'perimeter fence between acceptable and unacceptable belief and behavior'.¹³ Participating in these discussions were believers who humbly were open to the insights of others and those who were certain that they possessed the truth and were suspicious of different views. But even the most tolerant were convinced that there were limits that needed to define orthodoxy. The controversies that centred upon Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were episodes that defined what those limits were.

Roger Williams was a seeker for further truth whose efforts to push the logical limits of Puritan belief caused considerable controversy in Massachusetts from his first arrival in 1631, when he refused to join that church because it had failed publicly to renounce the Church of England. Despite their liturgical and ecclesiological breaks with English church practice, the colonists insisted that they still considered themselves in communion with the national church, their 'dear mother'.¹⁴ Seeking a more overtly separatist environment, Williams soon moved to the Plymouth Colony. There some of his other views proved disturbing to Governor William Bradford and others, and in 1633 Williams returned to the Bay Colony as an assistant to Salem's Samuel Skelton.¹⁵

In his ongoing effort to explore the further implications of his own beliefs, Williams had come to hold a number of controversial views. He believed that women should wear veils in church. He expressed concerns that the clerical conferences were moving the colony towards presbyterian practices. And he was believed to have encouraged the Salem magistrate John Endecott to cut the cross from the royal ensign used by the town's train band. When the Salem congregation voted to make him its pastor following the death of Skelton in 1634, many of the colony's magistrates and ministers were concerned. Williams had continued to wrestle with the issue of the proper relationship between church and state. Massachusetts had created a distinction between the two spheres by determining that no clergyman could hold civil office (a break with English precedents) and by insisting that penalties in the one sphere did not automatically carry consequences in the other, but this was insufficient for Williams. In 1635 he preached that a magistrate should not administer an oath to an unregenerate man, thus calling into question the oath of allegiance which the colony officials had recently required of all inhabitants. He asserted that it was wrong for the magistrates to punish breaches of the first table of the Ten Commandments.

John Cotton and other clergy sought to persuade Williams that he had gone too far in seeking to purify the worship of God, but he continued to assert his views. Powerless to order the Salem church to change their mind, the congregations of the Bay 'withdrew the right hand of fellowship' from that congregation, thus ostracising the church and its members in an attempt to get them to abandon Williams. The magistrates sent their own message by rejecting a Salem petition for an enlargement of its bounds. Williams reacted by demanding that Salem cut its ties with the other churches of the Bay, denounced them as antichristian and refused to have anything to do with those members of the Salem church who did not join him in these extreme measures. His position was untenable. In October 1635 the General Court offered him a last chance to retract his charges, with Thomas Hooker called in a last effort to persuade him. When Williams stood firm, he was sentenced to be banished. Warned of the impending action by John Winthrop, Williams fled south, where he settled in what was to be the town he named Providence.

While the dispute sparked by Roger Williams was working its course, a number of immigrants who would be at the heart of the next controversy were making their way to Massachusetts. John Cotton arrived in the colony in 1633, joining John Wilson in the ministry of the

Boston church. In 1634 the family of William and Anne Hutchinson, who had often made the long journey from Alford to Boston, Lincolnshire to hear Cotton preach, made the longer journey to America to be members of the Boston, Massachusetts church. Anne's brother-in-law, the clergyman John Wheelwright, accompanied them. Shortly thereafter William and Mary Dyer arrived from London. Henry Vane, a Puritan though the son of a prominent member of the king's court, arrived in 1635. Each of these men and women had their own unique understanding of God's ways, shaped by their particular English experiences.

All Puritans accepted that they were sinners who deserved damnation for their transgressions against God's law, yet hoped that they were among those whom God had elected for salvation. The challenge faced by believers was how they might know if they were saved. Some clergy suggested that men and women look to their lives, not in the hope that they could ever merit heaven, but on the assumption that grace changed the saints and that the fruits of that change would be godly behaviour. Others feared that such advice would lead people to come to rely on their works for assurance, subtly leading them to accept the discredited covenant of works. These Puritans relied instead on the sensation of God's caress that they had received at the first intimation that they had been elect and that they periodically were refreshed by anew. Many drew on both of these methods of gaining assurance. All these approaches were clearly being discussed in the Boston church in the mid-1630s, with many of the new arrivals – including Cotton, Vane, Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer – encouraging their fellow congregants to feel the free grace of the spirit and to avoid relying on the evidence of works.¹⁶

There is no evidence that this dialogue in the Boston church was disruptive in any way during the first years that Cotton and Hutchinson were there. But the church was not isolated, and word of the ideas being discussed was soon common knowledge elsewhere in the colony. Thomas Shepard, who was pastor of the Newtown (soon to be renamed Cambridge) congregation, had arrived in the colony in October of 1635. As a young man Shepard had been drawn to and then reacted against spiritist varieties of Puritanism. His attacks on what he viewed as the heretical teachings being advanced in the Boston church triggered a controversy that threatened to tear the colony apart.¹⁷

What may have once been genuine dialogue in the Boston church became a colony-wide argument, with the supporters of John Cotton pitted against John Wilson and the majority of the Massachusetts clergy,

each side placing the most extreme interpretation possible on the views of the other. Many in the Boston church likely rallied around Cotton's party because of their resentment at outside efforts to challenge their discussions. The fact that Henry Vane, who had been elected the colony's Governor in 1636, was the most prominent of those who claimed to be following Cotton made the rift more serious. At a conference in Cotton's home in October of 1636 some of his fellow clergy questioned him on his views on the actions of the Spirit, and then called Anne Hutchinson to join them and discuss her own views. Her assertion (as several clergymen remembered it) that Cotton preached a covenant of grace while they preached a covenant of works only enflamed the situation. Over the following months Winthrop and the newly arrived John Davenport laboured to hold the centre, struggling against the dynamic that was pushing the extremists on both sides to assert ever greater hostility to the position of their opponents. They gradually brought Cotton to realise that his self-proclaimed disciples were in fact going beyond him in expressing an actual union of the Spirit with the saints.

While the issue dividing the colony was religious, it was impossible for it not to spill over into the public sphere. The General Court appointed a day of fast and prayer to petition God's aid in restoring peace to the colony, and John Wheelwright, a supporter of the enthusiasts, was invited to preach the fast-day sermon in the Boston church. His sermon was anything but irenic, as he called upon those with the true spirit of godliness to put on their spiritual armour, identify their Antichristian enemies and 'kill them with the word of the Lord' while being 'willing to be killed like sheep'. It was spiritual conflict that he had talked about but in an age when spiritual hostility could easily lead to physical violence (and would soon do so again in Scotland, Ireland and England itself), Wheelwright's sermon was highly inflammatory. The General Court found Wheelwright guilty of sedition (and contempt of the Court in that they had appointed the day for the purpose of reconciliation), but deferred his sentence. Supporters of the clergyman soon gathered signatures on a petition on his behalf.

In the colony elections of 1637, Winthrop was returned to the Governor's office. Recognising that new arrivals were more likely to have been radicalised by recent trends in England and thus support the enthusiasts, the General Court passed a measure that limited the stay of any newcomers unless they were approved by two of the magistrates. The tide had finally turned, but the controversy was by no means over. Massachusetts had become embroiled in a conflict with the Pequot tribe

in southern New England. When John Wilson was appointed chaplain to accompany a military expedition being dispatched to the front, many Bostonians refused to serve because they rejected his spiritual guidance. In August, Vane, who may have found himself surrounded by those more intolerant than he was, returned to England, where he would later play an important role in the events of the Puritan Revolution.

Over the course of that summer there were numerous private conferences in which the moderates tried to wean some of the enthusiasts back to the centre, and Cotton clearly participated in this effort. A synod of the churches in November 1637 condemned eighty-two errors that they either believed members of the Boston church had advocated or feared that they might be harbouring. Also in November, the General Court gave Wheelwright a last chance to repent his sermon and, when he refused, banished him. Those who had signed the petition in his favour had been disarmed, and the most outspoken of them banished. Finally, Anne Hutchinson was brought before the Court. With little to go on, since as a woman she had neither preached publicly nor signed petitions, the proceedings were indecisive until she threatened the magistrates that if they proceeded as they had been doing they would bring a curse upon themselves and their posterity, and that she knew this by direct revelation from God. This was enough for the Court to banish her. Subsequently, she was brought to a separate trial before the Boston church, which excommunicated her. Hutchinson and some of her closest supporters migrated south into the same region that Roger Williams had departed to, forming their own communities in what would in the 1640s become Rhode Island. John Wheelwright chose to move north, into the future New Hampshire, and would later be reconciled with the Massachusetts authorities.

The banishment of Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson and the punishments later inflicted on others who were deemed outside the perimeter fence established by the colonists should not surprise us. While Puritans believed that God called them to exercise charity in loving and listening to those of differing views whom they deemed to have the root of the matter in them, they also believed that God called them to exercise a form of tough love in correcting those who professed errors that endangered their own souls and those of others, and to punish those who persisted in error. If a part of the body were infected and incapable of cure it had to be cut off lest it corrupt the rest of the body. This was especially true in a society which believed that it had covenanted with God to see his will done and which believed that it would be punished by God if it failed to make these choices. And it must

be remembered that an Anne Hutchinson was every bit as intolerant of the views of her opponents as they were of hers.¹⁸

Prior to the controversy that erupted in the Boston church, Thomas Hooker and other Bay colonists had migrated to the Connecticut River Valley where they planted new settlements with more available pasture and opportunities to engage in the fur trade in interior New England. These settlements and the town of Saybrook, initially founded by John Winthrop Jr as agent of Lord Say and Sele, Lord Brooke and a set of English adventurers who started but then abandoned the plan for a new colony in the region, emerged to become the colony of Connecticut. Following the resolution of the controversy in the Bay, John Davenport and his followers, largely consisting of former parishioners from London's St Stephen's Coleman Street, founded the town of New Haven on the southern Connecticut coast. Over the following years other towns along Long Island Sound joined with them to form the separate colony of New Haven. Both of these new settlements were within the perimeter fence of orthodoxy, though each had its own unique emphases, Connecticut earning a reputation as more lenient in its tests of faith than Massachusetts, and New Haven as bending more towards a strict application of principles. All three of these colonies, and Plymouth as well, joined together in the New England Confederation in the 1640s, with Rhode Island beyond the pale and not part of the union.¹⁹

NEW ENGLAND AND ENGLAND

These developments – both the evolution of Massachusetts institutions and the episodes of Dissent – were closely followed by Puritans abroad. Clergy in the Netherlands such as Hugh Peter, Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye corresponded with colonial friends. It is possible that Peter drew upon some of the earliest Massachusetts experiments to reorganise the Rotterdam church in the early 1630s. English Puritans, concerned that Massachusetts was drifting towards separatism, sent a number of enquiries. The colonists carefully answered these charges in scribal publications that would later be published after censorship in England collapsed in the 1640s.²⁰

New Englanders also rejected charges that they had deserted England in its time of need, asserting that they had come to New England to pray for England and to model a better path to effecting God's will. During the 1630s they combined their advice to their countrymen with prayers for the reform of their native land and for the Protestant cause in the Thirty Years' War. When fighting broke out between Charles I and the Scots in

1638, New Englanders paid close attention in the hope that the door for reform might swing open in England. They followed with concern the news of the Irish uprising, and mobilised their prayers for the Reformed cause.

New England's support for the parliamentary cause in the 1640s and the Commonwealth and Protectorate afterwards was as unequivocal and strong as could be imagined.²¹ 'Churches of praying believers', in the words of the clergyman Thomas Cobbett, were 'terrible as so many armies with banners, as so many thundering legions'.²² The colonists regularly gathered in their churches 'to come upon the backs of God's enemies with deadly fasting and prayer, murderers that will kill point blank from one end of the world to another'.²³ An agency that included the ministers Hugh Peter and Thomas Welde was sent to England to seek aid for the colonies but also to assist in the cause of Reformation. In 1643 the General Court omitted reference to the king from the colony's oath of allegiance and in 1644 passed an ordinance that made it a capital crime to 'by word, writing, or action endeavor to disturb our peace, directly or indirectly, by drawing a party . . . for the King of England and such as adjoin with him against the Parliament'.²⁴ When a ship captain with a parliamentary commission seized a Bristol (loyal to the king) vessel in Boston harbour, the General Court debated but upheld the validity of the act.²⁵

Many colonists returned to England to offer direct support for the cause. Some joined the parliamentary army. Clergy returned to resume the parish ministry that they had been forced to leave in the 1630s, or to assume a role in the formation of new congregations, in most cases introducing the New England Way. They were joined by seven of the ten graduates of Harvard's first class (1642), who along with future graduates such as Nathaniel, Samuel and Increase Mather, found livings in the Reformed churches of England and Ireland.²⁶

But the principal role played by the colonists was that of advisor. John Cotton, Thomas Hooker and John Davenport declined invitations to sit in the Westminster Assembly, the body appointed by parliament to craft a Reformed national church, but they and fellow colonists like John Eliot, Thomas Cobbett and John Norton engaged in the polemical war between Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Just as Scottish clergy such as Robert Baillie promoted Presbyterianism in print, New Englanders were outspoken advocates of Congregationalism. And an important element of the debate was the argument over New England's brief history. Did the New England Way produce opinionists such as Williams and Hutchinson? Could Congregationalism control such

destructive forces? Could sectarian Independents trust their alliance with England's Congregational Dissenting Brethren given the intolerance of the New England churches? In addition to orthodox colonists offering their views on such issues, those who had been on the other side of the fence – such as Roger Williams and Henry Vane – offered their contributions. Recognising the challenges faced by their English Congregational friends, the colonists supported them in public tracts and private correspondence.²⁷

Concerned to pre-empt any effort by parliament to extend a Presbyterian settlement to the colonies, and also determined to advocate to Englishmen the superiority of Congregationalism, the Massachusetts General Court called representatives of the region's churches to assemble in Cambridge and produce a codification of the New England Way. In three sessions between 1646 and 1648 the Assembly produced the Cambridge Platform. The document incorporated the Westminster Confession of Faith. In matters of polity it spelled out the autonomy of individual congregations while accepting the value of synods or assemblies as advisory bodies. It was unclear on the question of who was eligible to be baptised, an ambiguity that reflected a growing difference on the issue. Regarded as the definitive statement of colonial church policy, it influenced the Declaration of Faith and Order adopted by English Congregationalists at the Savoy Assembly of 1658.

While news of the execution of Charles I shocked New Englanders, they did not withdraw their support from the parliament, and continued to support the cause during the Commonwealth and Protectorate periods. John Cotton preached a fast-day sermon in Boston justifying the actions of parliament and the army, including the regicide.²⁸ After his victory at Dunbar, Cromwell sent prisoners to New England to alleviate the labour shortage which had developed with the drying-up of immigration. Relief from customs duties, granted to New England by the Long Parliament, were continued by the new regime. The Protector sought the advice of John Cotton as he prepared his Western design. William Hooke, John Davenport's former colleague at New Haven, returned to England and became one of Cromwell's chaplains, and friends of the New England Way such as Thomas Goodwin and John Owen were also close to the Lord Protector.²⁹

All of this meant that the death of Cromwell, the collapse of Puritan hopes and the Restoration of Charles I would be a serious blow to the colonists. If the eyes of all people were upon them, those eyes were likely to be hostile. With their hope of saving England by their example relegated to history, the colonists would see themselves as a besieged

remnant of the good old cause, and be forced to find new ways to imagine their importance in God's plan.

Notes

1. The following discussion of Winthrop's 'Model of Christian Charity' is based on my discussion of the setting and context in *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (New York, 2003), pp. 173–84. There are many printed versions of the sermon; quotes are from the modernised text that will be published electronically on the website of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
2. For general overviews of New England see J. A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore, 2006); R. Archer, *Fissures in the Rock: New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Hanover, NH, 2001); and F. J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*, revised edition (Hanover, NH, 1995).
3. F. J. Bremer, 'The heritage of John Winthrop: religion along the Stour Valley, 1548–1630', *New England Quarterly*, 70 (1997), 515–47.
4. George Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts* (New York, 1960).
5. The similarities between the county commission and the government of the Bay as well as other aspects of the government of the colony are discussed in F. J. Bremer, 'The county of Massachusetts: the governance of John Winthrop's Suffolk and the shaping of the Massachusetts Bay Colony', in F. J. Bremer and L. Botelho, eds., *The World of John Winthrop: Essays on England and New England 1588–1649* (Boston, 2006).
6. For English patterns see F. G. Emmison, ed., *Early Essex Town Meetings* (London, 1970); for a more recent example of the many excellent studies of New England towns see R. Thompson, *Divided We Stand: Watertown, Massachusetts, 1630–1680* (Amherst, 2001).
7. See J. Scott, *Commonwealth Principles* (Cambridge, 2004).
8. These practices are discussed in the context of the conference movement in *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church*, ed. P. Collinson, J. Craig and B. Usher (Woodbridge, 2003).
9. D. A. Weir, *Early New England: A Covenanted Society* (Grand Rapids, 2005).
10. J. F. Cooper, Jr, *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (New York, 2002).
11. The structure of services was described by Thomas Lechford in *Plain Dealing; or, News from New England* (London, 1642).
12. This is based upon an examination of the manuscript sermon notebooks kept by Robert Keayne as a member of the Boston church, which are in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
13. A. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006), p. 14.

14. The quotes are from the colonists' *Humble Request*, signed by Winthrop and the other leaders of the migration and printed in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston, MA, 1929–), II. 232.
15. For the controversy surrounding Roger Williams see E. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* (Grand Rapids, 1991).
16. For two excellent discussions of the different ways Puritans understood the process of salvation see T.D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and the Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); and D. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground* (Stanford, CA, 2004).
17. The controversy, generally referred to as the Antinomian Controversy, is best approached through M. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton, 2002), which the following paragraphs are largely based on.
18. For excellent discussions of the issues of toleration and intolerance see Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, and J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000).
19. See Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, ch. 5.
20. For some of these transatlantic connections and communications see F.J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community* (Boston, 1994).
21. A different view of New England's reaction to the English conflict is offered by C. Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).
22. Thomas Cobbett, *A Practical Discourse of Prayer* (1657), 'To the reader'.
23. William Hooke, *New England's Sence of Old England and Irelands Sorrows* (London, 1645), pp. 116–17.
24. *The Journal of John Winthrop*, ed. R. Dunn, L. Yeandle and J. Savage (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 432; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England, 1628–1686*, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston, MA, 1853–4), II. 69.
25. *Journal of John Winthrop*, pp. 524ff.
26. Bremer, *John Winthrop*, p. 335.
27. A number of historians, including Perry Miller and Carla Pestana, have maintained that the colonists were alienated by the Dissenting Brethren's advocacy of a policy of limited toleration and that they withdrew their support. These views are based on a misdated letter from English clergy to their New England friends. See F.J. Bremer, 'When? Who? Why? Re-evaluating a 17th-century source', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 99 (1987), 63–75.
28. F.J. Bremer, editor and introduction, 'In defense of regicide: John Cotton on the execution of Charles I', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 37 (1980), 103–24.
29. For more detail see F.J. Bremer, 'Overseas dispatches I. The view from America: New England, the Civil Wars and Oliver Cromwell', *Cromwelliana*, 2nd series, 1 (2004), 87–99.

Further reading

- Bozeman, Theodore Dwight, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Bremer, Francis J., *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Cogley, Richard W., *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
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8 New England, 1660–1730

DAVID D. HALL

The 1660s saw sharp changes in the situation of Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic. The provisions of the Act of Conformity of 1662, one of several punitive measures enacted by the English government after the restoration of Charles II in 1660, made it virtually impossible for Puritan-minded clergy to evade the canons of the Church of England, as so many had done before 1640. Thereafter, nonconformity or 'Dissent' referred to people who practised their Protestantism outside the church. No transition of this magnitude occurred in New England, where patterns of culture that we may safely name Puritan retained their hegemony. But the colonists would undergo an 'adjustment to empire' that altered the connections between civil and religious life.¹ Simultaneously, congregations and clergy began a process of reworking the basis of church membership. Each of these phases of change was controversial, spawning contested elections and sharp conflicts in colonies and local communities.

Yet any visitor to New England at the turn of the century would have noticed many elements of continuity. The *Platform of Discipline* or 'Cambridge Platform' of 1648 was still a persuasive description of the Congregational Way. In their everyday preaching the clergy persisted in emphasising the difference between 'vital' or 'experimental' religion and religion that was external, a matter of mere 'formality'. Meanwhile, congregations and ministers were practising rituals of fasts and thanksgivings that flowed from long-persisting assumptions about a covenanted people's obligations to observe God's will. For these and other reasons New England seemed to some contemporaries a society in which social life was thoroughly penetrated by the work of 'reformation' that had meant so much to the Puritan movement.

Where does the balance lie between elements of change and those of continuity? To this question historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given conflicting answers, and agreement seems unlikely in the twenty-first. For many who have studied the American side of

the story, the second half of the seventeenth century and early decades of the eighteenth are best characterised as a time of 'declension' from the ideals and practices of the immigrant generation. We owe this story to denominational historians wanting to understand why, in the early nineteenth century, the Congregational churches of New England divided into 'liberal' and 'orthodox' wings, the liberal promptly adopting the name of Unitarianism. According to those historians who remained orthodox, the critical turn of events that allowed the liberals to become the majority in dozens of congregations in eastern Massachusetts was the 'laxness' that set in after 1660. The twentieth-century historian Perry Miller incorporated this interpretation into his magisterial *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953), adding to it the argument that the ministers gradually allowed works righteousness to infiltrate a grace-centred orthodoxy. He discerned the ultimate proof of decline in the turn-of-the-century minister Cotton Mather's frenetic anxieties, over-the-top prose style and simplifying summaries of Christian doctrine.²

Two other possible interpretations, each also emphasising change, are to regard the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a time of transition from 'Puritan' to 'Yankee' (or 'community' to 'individualism'),³ and to portray certain tendencies – perhaps especially the confusion of second- and third-generation colonists about their place in Christian history – as signalling the colonists' adaptation to new circumstances, a process seen as culminating in the emergence of an 'American' version of Puritanism. Yet for reasons that will emerge as we proceed, none of these frameworks is entirely satisfactory. Indeed, the historian Stephen Foster has argued that the tensions within late-seventeenth-century New England Puritanism were inherited from the Puritan movement of the late sixteenth century.⁴

Much of this chapter will be about the most powerful of these tensions, imagining the church both as a comprehensive means of grace and as a selective gathering of 'visible saints' worthy to participate in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Given the prevalence of arguments for declension, another concern must be theology, the question being whether the second- and third-generation colonists sustained the orthodoxy enshrined in the Westminster Confession of 1647. And did everyday piety give way to more routinised forms of practice?

Giving precedence to these questions means that some events and activities important to the colonists cannot be described in detail. One such activity was the missionary outreach to the Native Americans. Thanks to financial support channelled through the New England

Company, re-charted in London in 1662, a printing office in Cambridge issued John Eliot's translation of the Bible into Algonquian (1663). By 1675 Eliot and other ministers had ushered two Native churches into being, together with fourteen 'praying towns'. Meanwhile the Martha's Vineyard mission was beginning to rely on Native preachers.⁵ King Philip's War of 1675–6 severely disrupted the mainland communities. By 1700, with the Native population in steady decline, the number of Christian-dominated towns had shrunk. After 1690, moreover, the colonists were drawn into near-constant fighting as warfare between Britain and France spilled over into New England.

Despite the risks of moving further into the interior, the colonists continued to extend the areas of settlement and to carve new towns out of older communities. More often than not, proposals to create new towns on the outer edge of those that already existed were contentious, for these meant reducing the number of households in those older towns that could pay the minister's salary and other public expenses. The one constant was an ever-expanding population that in the aggregate was astonishingly youthful (the median age at the beginning of the eighteenth century was around sixteen). The economy too was expanding, fortunately at a rate that allowed most young persons to acquire adequate property (house and land) of their own.⁶

Incorporating the abundance of young people into the churches was, however, a far more difficult task. Doing so required rethinking who qualified for the sacrament of baptism. The immigrants of the 1630s had limited the privilege of baptism to the children of adults who entered the church by making 'a personall & publick confession, & declaring of Gods manner of working upon the soul', an exercise that became known as making a 'relation' of the 'work of grace' (*Platform of Discipline*, ch. 12). No one could claim a right to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper merely on the basis of his or her membership in the Church of England, and no parents could have their children baptised unless one of them became a member. The 'Congregational Way', the name that emerged for the colonists' new system, thus veered towards the sectarian pole of the Puritan spectrum. But in no town did every adult join and in most, married men lagged behind their wives.⁷ Moreover, by the 1650s and 1660s the baptised children of these adult members, now transformed into adults themselves and beginning to have children, were failing to make the 'relations' that had come so easily to their parents. Although these 'adult children' were members of the church because of their baptismal covenant, their children were not entitled to be baptised nor they themselves allowed to partake of the

Lord's Supper unless, like their parents, they met the criterion of the 'work of grace' and became 'full' members.

Finding some means of keeping these people in the church and baptising their children occupied an inter-colonial gathering of ministers in 1657 (prompted to do so by the Connecticut General Assembly) and a Massachusetts-based 'synod' in 1662, which reaffirmed the recommendations of 1657. These were that the adult children were authentic members on the basis of the 'external' covenant God had made with Abraham (Genesis 17:7) and his descendants; and that the children of these adults, encompassed as they were within the same covenant, could be baptised. Scripturally, these arguments assumed that the Abrahamic covenant of the Old Testament extended into the New. The ministers also ruled that the Lord's Table was open only to persons who became full members via a relation of the work of grace, and they alone were entitled to vote on crucial matters of church business, like admitting persons to membership and acts of church discipline.⁸

The architects of this scheme regarded it as a 'middle way between extremes', these being either to admit everyone in external covenant to all the means of grace or to strip adult children of their membership. Neither was tenable, the first because it would mean giving up the bedrock principle that the 'profane' should not be allowed into the church, the second because it would sharply reduce the number of persons in membership.⁹ The group supporting this middle way persuaded themselves that it had the sanction of the leading architects of the Congregational Way. Yet John Davenport of New Haven opposed the recommendations of 1662 and quoted Thomas Hooker's opinion that only parents in regular membership could have their children baptised.¹⁰ Lay church members were of several minds, some welcoming the new measures, others enraged by them. Controversy and schism were the inevitable outcome as churches and ministers attempted to practise the synod's recommendations.¹¹

To regard this redefinition of baptism as a step towards 'laxness' is to ignore patterns of behaviour writ large in town and church records. The most important of these patterns was the significant numbers of adults in many towns who seemed indifferent to church membership and to having their children baptised. We hear of these people from Anglican or Antipuritan contemporaries who reported that a substantial number of colonists were behaving in this manner. One such hostile witness insisted in 1689 that the number in church fellowship was one in ten.¹² Other, less biased observers called attention to the same phenomenon, though singling out the behaviour of 'adult children' who, while

members in some sense, were slow to reaffirm their baptismal covenants as the necessary prelude to the baptism of their own children. Thus the Connecticut General Assembly in 1676 complained that ‘many Baptized Adult persons [were] neglecting & too many refusing to Own their Baptismal Covenant’.¹³ Writing in 1671 from Killingworth, Connecticut, the town minister John Woodbridge told the English nonconformist Richard Baxter of discovering that sixty ‘men, women, and children’ were ‘unbaptised . . . though the whole plantation consist not of above 30 householders’. Newly arrived in Salem Village (Danvers) at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Joseph Green noted that ‘many Persons . . . belong to the Congregation who are not baptised’ and made it one of the goals of his ministry to ‘persuade and incline them (or some of them at least) to seek after that Ordinance of Baptisme’.¹⁴

More light is thrown on the presence of these people by the actions of Joseph Capen, who became minister of nearby Topsfield in 1684. Capen counted forty-nine members, twenty-seven of them women. Within seven years he had baptised 200 townspeople, some of whom must have been adults; by 1702 the total had reached 572. His records reveal that entire families had neglected to participate, for on a single day in 1697 seven Perleys ‘entered into Covenant . . . on thar fathers account at the same time’ and, on the same day, so did eight or nine Averills.¹⁵ In other churches, too, children were being brought to baptism in bunches, like grapes, either the same or following Sunday after one of their parents was baptised for the first time or agreed to renew his or her baptismal covenant.¹⁶

Paradoxically, other adults hastened to bring their new-born children to the meeting house. Here again, church records provide innumerable examples of children being baptised within a few days, or at most ten, of their birth. Sixty per cent of the children in those Essex County, Massachusetts churches for whom date of both birth and baptism is known were brought to church within this brief interval. The data also indicate that adults came forward to renew their baptismal covenant in close proximity to the birth of children as a means of ensuring their new-borns could be baptised. Even though the Puritan theory of baptism limited it to being a sign of grace, lay people reasoned otherwise, grieving when a child died before the ordinance could be administered or finding comfort from its having brought their child within the covenant.¹⁷

A third pattern of lay behaviour, noted not only in church records but also in sermons, was a reluctance among baptised adults to complete their membership by participating in the Lord’s Supper. ‘The so general

a neglect [of the Lord's Table] . . . hath been both a wonder, and grief of heart to me, almost ever since I have been in the Ministry', Benjamin Wadsworth of Boston testified in 1724. Half a century earlier, the Connecticut General Assembly had complained of 'Many persons not coming to the Lords Supper or So Much as Seeking ye Enjoyment of such a Gospel priviledge'.¹⁸ The extent of the problem is revealed in the discrepancy between the number of adults admitted as half-way members and those admitted as full, that is, having satisfied the qualification – still in most congregations some form of relation – for making that transition. Solomon Stoddard, the minister of Northampton, estimated in 1708 that the ratio for the churches in general was four halfway to each full member.¹⁹ Whatever the exact percentages, almost every congregation contained a clump of persons who attended regularly, were deemed Christians in how they behaved, had their children baptised (early or late), but who never came forward to describe themselves as converted. The 'laxness' interpretation also fails to account for these people, for it was scrupulosity and its close cousin, insufficient assurance of salvation, that made them hesitate. Having absorbed the message that the Lord's Supper was reserved for persons who had assurance of being converted, and hearing, too, that anyone 'unworthy' who partook of the sacrament was eating and drinking his own damnation (1 Corinthians 11:28–30), these people were (as Stoddard said in his pungent manner) 'scared out of Religion'.²⁰

These overlapping forms of behaviour greatly complicated the pastoral and evangelical work of the ministers. On the one hand they continued to preach for conversion in the manner of their predecessors. Some became famous for doing so – Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts and, in the early eighteenth century, Timothy Edwards of East Windsor, Connecticut and William Williams of Hatfield, Massachusetts, all three of whom experienced seasons of special fervency – it seems anachronistic to name them 'revivals' – in their congregations, moments when the age-old question, 'What must I do to be saved?', suddenly became urgent.²¹ These men emphasised again and again that lay people needed to hear the core truths of the practical divinity: the fallen state of humankind, Christ's offer of mercy, the worthlessness of moral behaviour, the sinner's dependence on grace provided by a sovereign God. 'Man hath destroyed himself, but it is beyond his power to save himself', William Williams declared in *The Great Salvation Revealed and Offered in the Gospel* (1717). In the same breath they insisted that

sinner not remain passive but prepare themselves through the 'law' for the offer of grace:

The more sensible thou art of thy unworthiness to lay hold upon the promises, the more thou art fitted, and qualified, to lay hold upon them, for the promises are . . . the fruits of free Grace.

Preaching centred on this mixture of themes – a mixture also present in the practical divinity – was 'evangelical' in bringing the gospel message of 'new birth' to sinners who were otherwise condemned to suffer God's wrath.²²

The same themes resound through the sermons of the Boston minister Increase Mather, beginning with those collected in *Some Important Truths about Conversion* (1684; reprinted, 1721). Yet the Mathers and their colleagues throughout New England also extolled the 'external' covenant of Genesis 17:7, usually adding that those within this covenant must renew their commitment to the Christian life when they became adults. Partly in response to Baptist criticism but also in order to enhance the meaning of church membership for those who seemed indifferent, Mather declared in *Pray for the Rising Generation* (1678) that 'the vein of election doth run through the loins of godly parents for the most part'. In this same sermon he stressed the importance of mothers in the spiritual economy of the household, a theme his father had employed before him. Similarly, William Williams responded to the emergence of local Baptists by extolling the church as a means of grace: 'out of the visible Church the Elect are ordinarily gathered, for which end, God hath established his Ordinances amongst them'. This emphasis on the nurturing role of the church was accompanied by assertions that church members must be active Christians, using the 'free Choice' that was theirs to embrace the external covenant²³ – usually, however, with a coda noting that, despite the benefits of baptism, the doorway to being saved was an inward transformation that involved the Holy Spirit. Still another refrain of these sermons was the warning that baptised Christians *must* improve upon their covenant or face the wrath of a disappointed God.²⁴

Few ministers paid much attention to broader matters of doctrine. Twice the New England clergy put themselves on record as adherents of the Westminster Confession, the Massachusetts clergy in 1680 and their colleagues in Connecticut in 1708. (Strictly speaking, in 1680 the clergy acknowledged the authority of the 'Savoy' adaptation of Westminster.)²⁵ Well into the eighteenth century, students at newly founded Yale and, to a lesser extent, Harvard had to master the Protestant scholasticism

represented by two early seventeenth-century textbooks, William Ames's *Marrow of Sacred Divinity* and Johann Wollebius's *Abridgement of Christian Divinitie*.²⁶ Protestant scholasticism found its major New England spokesman in Samuel Willard of Third Church, Boston, the only minister in New England other than Samuel Stone of Hartford to prepare a systematic explication of doctrine and its philosophical scaffolding, the posthumously published *Compleat Body of Divinity* (1726). In his thinking Aristotelian rationalism meshed with Reformed doctrine in ways that would have been familiar to countless continental Reformed academics of the seventeenth century. Willard's anthropology, with its insistence on human free will (God has so arranged things that persuasion is the sole means of moving humans to act) and reason as an innate faculty, was in no sense innovative. Nor did he break fresh ground with his treatment of the covenant of grace as a matter of mutual obligations freely entered into by God on the one hand and humankind on the other. This was not a covert doctrine of works righteousness, for Willard insisted that divine grace (or initiative) made it possible for humans to fulfil the conditions of this covenant. Aware of the Deist critique of revelation, Willard also reiterated the biblicism of his tradition even as he also elaborated a natural theology.²⁷

The most prolific pastor-theologians were the father-and-son team of Increase and Cotton Mather, who shared the pulpit of Boston Second Church between 1684 and 1723, the year Increase died. Both repeatedly emphasised the difference between 'vital' or 'inward' piety and the deluding simulacres of hypocrisy or formality. Though Cotton has become the poster child for the thesis of decline, nothing in his outpouring of publications merits the label 'Arminian'. On the contrary, he responded to currents of this kind within English nonconformity by reaffirming the priority of *Free-Grace* (1706). Most of the time, however, he preferred a strategy of pleading for agreement on a short list (as few as three) of necessary truths. Always a biblicist who urged his audience to rely on the Word, he flirted with 'reason' but returned in the end to the priority of revelation. After 1700 he devoted himself to the theme of experience – not a Lockean version of experience but one centred on the Holy Spirit as it acted upon the inner self. Mather's incessant concern with a 'practical' piety connected to the everyday workings of the world links him with the Pietist movement in Germany.²⁸

The contours of piety among lay people were as various as their attitudes towards baptism, the Lord's Supper and church membership. The only 'relations' to survive from the turn of the century are a dozen or

so from Timothy Edwards's congregation in East Windsor. These display acute anxiety about sin: 'I was told that I should labor still for a deeper sense of my sin and misery', one woman told the congregation, 'and . . . that I should beg God to give me a sight of the corruption of my own nature, and the wickedness of my own heart.'²⁹ They also indicate a close connection between episodes of severe illness or someone's death and anguished self-examinations of this kind. Another extraordinary event, her captivity during King Philip's War, prompted Mary Rowlandson, a mother of three and wife of the town minister in Lancaster, Massachusetts, to write *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God* (1682). Its principal theme is that being 'afflicted' (losing a child and other kinfolk as well as all her personal possessions in the Indian attack) was God's means of showing his love to someone who had wavered in her faithfulness. Rowlandson spoke frankly of her failings as a Christian, remembering how her attention wandered during Sunday services (her husband was the minister!) and her carelessness about Sundays. A second theme is the 'vanity' of the world, for the deprivations of food and fellowship she experienced in the wilderness taught her the truth of that biblical injunction. Inadvertently, therefore, her text suggests that in some phases of her life she matched the description of 'formalism' that the ministers preached about so often. One literary response to that condition was Cotton Mather's *A Token for the Children of New England* (1700), a collection of pious children's deathbed reflections based on the English nonconformist James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1672), a book widely available in New England. These contain stories of children who, as Christian virtuos, model a disdain for the world and a 'joyful' attitude towards death.

During her captivity Mary Rowlandson repeatedly opened a Bible and meditated on the verses that caught her eye. Reading in this manner was among the devotional practices that may have been more widely practiced after 1660 than before. Two New England writers of unusual distinction, Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, each wrote devotional texts: Bradstreet a collection of prose 'Meditations', probably dating from the 1660s and addressed to her 'dear son Simon Bradstreet', and Taylor an inter-connected series of poems, 'Preparatory Meditations' on the Lord's Supper.³⁰ The ceremony of renewal of covenant, though more sporadically practised than some ministers would have wished, was another practice that came into wider use after 1675 as a spur to piety. Fast days and thanksgiving days were other occasions that prompted reflection and renewal, as demonstrated by the Boston magistrate and merchant Samuel Sewall's diary.³¹

Beneath the surface, however, the forces of change were at work. When Charles Morton, a Dissenting minister-turned-academic, arrived in Massachusetts in 1686, he introduced to Harvard students his 'Compendium Physicae', a physics textbook that rejected much of the lore of wonders that Increase Mather was still dispensing. During the same decade the English Latitudinarian Henry More's *Enchiridion Ethicum* was introduced as the textbook in moral theology, or ethics.³² Between 1700 and 1725 the pace of change quickened. An emerging network of 'Catholick' preachers centred on William Brattle of Cambridge professed their admiration for Archbishop John Tillotson's sermons.³³

A more dramatic rupture with the past occurred in Connecticut where Samuel Johnson, surprised by what he came upon in a cache of books recently donated to Yale College, discarded a 'synopsis' of all knowledge he was making to earn his master's degree, converted to Anglicanism and jettisoned the federal theology of Westminster.³⁴ By 1730 some younger graduates of Harvard and Yale who remained Congregational were also preaching sermons flavoured with arguments on behalf of natural religion and innate moral righteousness. Yet hindsight of these events should not overly colour our understanding of the early eighteenth century, for no one at the time could have foreseen the strength of the liberalising currents that were beginning to disrupt English nonconformity and the Church of Scotland.³⁵

No element of change held more possibilities for drama (and tragedy) than the arrival of Quakers in the late 1650s and the re-emergence of local Baptists. The English Quakers who brought their apocalyptic anticlericalism to New England in the late 1650s engaged in confrontations that could not be suppressed even though four of the missionaries were executed in 1659/60. The men and women who became Baptists were easier to understand; but for their doctrine of baptism they reiterated the sectarian-inclined Puritanism of the 1630s. But the forming of their own congregation in Boston/Charlestown in 1665 (others already existed in Plymouth Colony and Rhode Island) just as the measures of the synod of 1662 were being contested made them seem far more dangerous than they really were. Nonetheless, in the early eighteenth century no more than 1 per cent of the colonists in Massachusetts and Connecticut had affiliated with these two groups.³⁶

Witch-hunting ended in the same decade that saw the outright punishment of dissent cease. The Hartford witch-hunt of 1662–3 was a turning point, for some of the ministers and the colony's Governor, John Winthrop, Jr, questioned the adequacy of the evidence used in the trials.

A single execution in 1688 broke a near-twenty-year period in which courts for the most part ignored local accusations or refused to carry out jury verdicts of guilty. These tendencies failed to prevent the Salem witch-hunt of 1692 – a misnamed event given that the majority of ‘confessing witches’ lived in other Essex County towns. Even so, opposition to the trials was being voiced by mid-summer 1692 and helped bring the trials to an end by October.³⁷

The suspicions that fed the Salem witch-hunt were nourished by political problems arising out of the relationship between Massachusetts and the English government. Slow to acknowledge the restoration of Charles II, Massachusetts was stripped of its original charter in 1684. Thereafter, the colony was ruled by a royal Governor. This phase ended with the overthrow of James II in 1689 and, in 1691, the granting of a new charter to Massachusetts by William III. Under that charter, all direct connections between the franchise and church membership were severed. Yet the charter restored a locally elected assembly and magistrates and allowed the government to decide what group would have legal status as ‘orthodox’ religion – the answer being the Congregational Way. The new government ordered, too, that all taxpayers contribute to the support of orthodox religion. Baptists and Anglicans, although permitted their own ministers and congregations, were not released from supporting the Congregational Way until 1727.³⁸

Even though elements of a state-supported, single church persisted well into the eighteenth century, as early as the 1670s the ministers were complaining that civil leaders could not be counted upon to pursue the work of ‘reformation’. What had worked (barely) in 1679, when the Massachusetts General Court sanctioned the Reforming Synod, went nowhere in 1725 when the Governor and General Court ignored a ‘Memorial and address’ asking for a special synod to consider the reasons why the province was experiencing ‘a series of various Judgments’.³⁹ The situation in Connecticut was more advantageous, perhaps because the colony retained a far greater degree of self-governance. When Gurdon Saltonstall passed from the ministry to governorship of the colony in 1707, he and others of his thinking persuaded the General Assembly to summon the Saybrook synod. Its resolutions in favour of stronger supervision of local congregations were subsequently endorsed by the Assembly.

Where change was most manifest was in social ethics. The theme of ‘mutuality’ so important to the founders still figured in some church covenants and sermons.⁴⁰ But in the practice of charity the urban poor, rapidly becoming more numerous thanks to the casualties of war and

economic downturns, were far more likely to be the subjects of regulation than of local sympathy.⁴¹ Did these changes mark the coming of 'individualism'? So it has seemed to some historians, even though they acknowledge that the process of change extended well into the eighteenth century. The history of the Winthrop family seems a case in point, for the grandsons and great-grandsons of John Winthrop I were more 'Yankee' than 'Puritan'.⁴² As for political ideology, the most important word after 1690 may have been 'liberty' in the singular, a word of fresh significance in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution as the colonists struggled to align their speech with metropolitan patterns of discourse.

Yet almost to a person the ministers continued to rehearse a tradition of discourse grounded on the parallel between New England and Old Israel as peoples in covenant with God. Recalling this covenant and its obligations, the ministers invariably found much to complain of. Military setbacks at the outset of the eighteenth century prompted Timothy Edwards to label the defeats 'a corrective affliction' that required 'Sincere Repentance and hearty and Real returning unto God' on the part of a 'Sinfull and disobedient people'.⁴³ Meanwhile, the restoration of Charles II in 1660 was making a mockery of predictions that God was working within history to restore 'godly rule'. Nor was it possible after 1660 for the colonists to believe that the Congregational Way would serve as a model for other national churches seeking to recover from apostasy. Unable to reiterate the accusation that episcopacy was anti-Christian, historians such as Cotton Mather had to recast the story of why the colonists had left their homeland in the 1630s: not because that Church was unlawful but because the policies of a misguided few, like Archbishop Laud, had deprived some English of liberty of conscience.⁴⁴ His father Increase had previously played a major role in the 'invention' of New England, an extolling of the founders coupled with laments about the next generation. Speculation about the end times persisted, but not with the same political force as before 1660. Again it was the two Mathers who principally occupied themselves with deciphering the Book of Revelation, usually as chiliasts who expected to witness the conversion of the Jews and other signs of the coming kingdom.⁴⁵

None of these tendencies means that Puritan culture was becoming exhausted. Forged in opposition to a national church, the Puritanism of the colonists contained strains of sectarian, Holy-Spirit centred radicalism that erupted anew during the 'Great Awakening'. Yet by the end of the century the dominant mode of religion revolved around a

learned ministry and institutional church capable of incorporating almost everyone in some form of covenant. In becoming so inclusive Puritanism in New England accomplished far more than its English parent and nonconformist contemporaries were ever able to do. Perhaps in everyday life most of the colonists settled for something less than conversion and the highest standard of moral 'righteousness', but if so these too can be taken – ironically – as signs of success.

Notes

1. R. R. Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675–1715* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1981).
2. P. Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA, 1953), chs. 5 and 24; Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA, 1956), pp. 1–15.
3. See, e.g., J. F. Cooper, Jr, *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (New York, 1999).
4. S. Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill, 1991).
5. R. W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).
6. G. L. Main, *Peoples of a Spacious Land: Families and Cultures in Colonial New England* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), ch. 9.
7. M. M. Ramsbottom, 'Religion, Society and the Family in Charlestown, Massachusetts, 1630–1740' (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1987), *passim*.
8. W. Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, 1893), ch. 11.
9. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702; repr. 2 vols., Hartford, CT, 1853–5), II. 98–104.
10. Increase Mather, *The First Principles of New-England* (Cambridge, MA, 1675); R. G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant* (New Haven, 1969), ch. 2.
11. These agonies are narrated in Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*.
12. Samuel Maverick, 'A brief discription [sic] of New England and the severall townes therein, together with the present government thereof' (c. 1661), *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd series, I (1884–5), 240; *Andros Tracts*, ed. W. H. Whitmore, 3 vols. (Boston, 1868–74), II. 29, 37.
13. Wyllys Papers, *Connecticut Historical Society Collections*, 21 (1924), 237.
14. R. P. Stearns, 'Correspondence of John Woodbridge, Jr, and Richard Baxter', *New England Quarterly*, 10 (1937), 576; 'Danvers church records', *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 11 (1857), 321.
15. J. H. Gould, 'Early records of the church in Topsfield', *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 24 (1888), 3–27.
16. See, for example, 'Church records of Farmington in Connecticut', *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 11 (1857), 323–8.

17. Anne S. Brown, "'Bound up in a Bundle of Life': The Social Meaning of Religious Practice in Northeastern Massachusetts, 1700–1765" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1995); for the links between marriage and covenant renewal, see *ibid.*, pp. 63, 245; Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II. 111; Benjamin Colman, *Reliquiae Turellae, et Lachrymae Paeternae: Two Sermons Preach'd at Medford* (Boston, 1735), p. 101.
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9 Puritanism in Ireland and Wales

CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

Between 1530 and 1660, Ireland and Wales were sites of hope and anxiety for a series of English establishments. While they represented unparalleled opportunities for shining light in 'dark corners', the linguistic, cultural and religious differences of these parts of the Celtic periphery were often perceived to be threats to the metropolitan centre and its various reforming projects. This sense of threat was often felt and sometimes created by Puritans.

Puritan movements developed in Ireland and Wales in complex dialogue with their host and sponsoring cultures, sometimes sharing and sometimes opposing prominent themes in English (and, in Ulster, Scottish) Protestantism, and sometimes developing indigenous preferences in piety and theology.¹ In both countries, Puritans faced the challenge of religious apathy and, in the aftermath of the Civil Wars, an enduring royalism. Puritans subjected both countries to a determined push for reformation throughout the 1650s. Nevertheless, while Puritans in Ireland failed to capture the national imagination, their Welsh counterparts succeeded in laying the foundations for later Dissent. This chapter will make a number of general comparisons while looking in detail at the development of Puritan movements in Ireland and Wales, concentrating on the 1640s and 1650s, when Puritan movements became most obvious and when their boundaries became most difficult to sustain.

THE EMERGENCE OF PURITAN MOVEMENTS

A first admission, however, has to be that for much of the period there was no broad-based, clearly defined Puritan movement in either Ireland or Wales. The absence of a clearly defined movement could mean different things in each territory. In Wales, it indicated the gradual movement of reform, the population's passive satisfaction with conforming Protestantism and a general reluctance among the English

hierarchy to encourage more radical religious change. In Ireland, the absence of a clearly defined Puritan movement was instead the product of the native population's reluctance to embrace the new faith. This situation created distinctive pastoral needs, with ecclesiastical breadth emerging as a pragmatic response to the difficulty of finding suitable Protestant preachers. From its inception, therefore, Puritans took advantage of the breadth of the Irish church, moving from Scotland and England to find themselves no longer regarded as ecclesiastical outsiders. But their welcome into the ranks of the Irish clergy paradoxically stymied the development of a distinctive Puritan movement. Self-consciously Puritan movements could not exist in this period without the official opposition against which they could be defined. Instead, the Irish church welcomed Puritans into a slowly emerging Reformed consensus.

The theological situation of the new church was messy and fluid, balancing the demands of its mother church in England with those of its colonial situation. It took some time for the Church of Ireland to develop a distinctive theology. Its early decades were marked by doctrinal ambiguity and ecclesiastical pragmatism. The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1563) had no authority in the Irish church, which advanced on the much-reduced platform of the Twelve Articles (1567) and took advantage of its theological ambiguity to import English Puritan clergy. In the 1560s, Christopher Goodman and Thomas Cartwright both entered the country as private chaplains and were both unsuccessfully proposed as archbishops. In the 1570s, there were a number of suggestions that Puritans should be sent to Ulster – perhaps in the hope that pastoral difficulties in Ireland's most troublesome counties would keep them out of ecclesiastical mischief elsewhere. In the same decade, Adam Loftus, a future archbishop, was also being described as a 'Puritan', though he would later tone down his youthful bravado. This official welcoming of Puritans was consolidated in the 1590s, after the failure of the nascent English presbyterian movement, when the Irish church demonstrated its independent attitude to conformity in welcoming a number of ecclesiastical refugees. And Puritans these refugees certainly seemed to be. In 1605, Sir John Harington complained that the Irish Reformation was failing because 'Puritans are sent to persuade papists'. The presence of Puritans was so marked that Loftus, now archbishop of Dublin, felt the need to warn new Trinity fellows of their need to ensure public conformity to the expectations of the church, 'for I dread the hostility of innovation as being a thing laboured by too many in England already'. These complaints – and others like them – drove other members

of the Irish hierarchy to defend the older ambiguity. In the 1620s, preaching before King Charles, Archbishop James Ussher gave 'Puritans' their ultimate accolade: the 'vile' term 'Puritan' was being used to describe ordinary supporters of the Reformed consensus, he claimed; but it could also be used as a description of Jesus Christ.

The Reformed consensus that Ussher defended had been crystallised in the Irish Articles (1615). But, while Ussher was later to argue that 'Puritan' and 'Reformed' were interchangeable terms, the Irish Articles appeared to distinguish them, advancing a rigorously Calvinistic approach to a range of theological issues (including unprecedented confessional statements on the doctrine of predestination and the identity of the Antichrist) while showing limited interest in other matters of typically Puritan concern (such as the thorny issue of church government). Significantly, the Irish Articles went much further than the confession of the English church, with its 104 statements far outnumbering the English 39. Fifty-nine of the Irish statements quoted twenty-eight of the English Articles, offered a modification of seven others, and presented alternative renderings of two more. A further seventeen of the Irish statements were lifted from the English homilies. But the most important of the Irish Articles' innovations was their inclusion of the Lambeth Articles, a confession of faith representing English Puritan opinion which James VI and I had already dismissed. Little wonder, therefore, that Alan Ford has described the Irish Articles as 'a remarkable declaration of independence by the Church of Ireland'.² If the church that produced them cannot be described as 'Puritan', it was certainly struggling to define itself in a way that would contain a Puritan vision for its own reformation – at least temporarily.

The tenor of the Irish church changed markedly during the 1630s. In 1634, a convocation of the Irish church, influenced by the demands of the Wentworth regime, effectively replaced the Irish Articles with the Thirty-Nine Articles. Crucially, the 1634 canons required positive clerical subscription – a policy never before adopted in Ireland – and Wentworth believed that opposition to the new constitution could be traced to Puritans and 'Brownists'. With pressure mounting for Laudian uniformity throughout the three kingdoms, Bishop Henry Leslie's deployment of the 'P-word' in his attack on Ulster nonconformists in 1638 marked a new stage in ecclesiastical tension even as it supports Patrick Collinson's conclusion that these tensions were geographically and chronologically specific: Leslie's concern was that a movement of 'Puritanes' was clearly emerging in the north-east.³ This kind of episcopal opposition turned the broadly but uncomfortably conforming Puritans in the north-east into a

movement of presbyterians, buttressed by the results of religious revival and developing in close connection with their peers in south-west Scotland. Irish nonconformity was being organised across geographical boundaries. But this pattern of group cohesion seems unusual in the broader Irish context, where bishops in few other regions could boast – or lament – a recognisably Puritan movement.

As this evidence suggests, Irish usage of the term 'Puritan' could have multiple kinds of significance. The fact that the term was used more frequently at some times than at others suggests that it does provide some kind of barometer of social tension, an indication of the extent to which 'the hotter sort of Protestant' faced and sometimes generated opposition from above, from bishops and monarchs. Crucially, there appear to be no significant instances of the term being applied from below, as it often was in England, in communities opposed to Puritan efforts at social reconstruction. The frequency of the term's usage is therefore indicative of the regularity with which 'Puritans' were perceived to be in conflict with vocal elements of their host and sponsoring cultures. The development of usage in Ireland might suggest that significant tensions within and between distinctive groupings in church and society only begin to emerge in the early seventeenth century. In the 1630s, when the term is used to apply to the Ulster Presbyterians as a 'movement', it is clear that bishops are using the term as a catch-all of ecclesiastical opprobrium. That such an expansive definition of 'Puritan' had evolved despite its relative paucity of usage in Ireland is one indication of the proximity of Irish to English ecclesiastical debates. The Irish Puritan was being defined by a stereotype that was already well established in England.

To suggest the existence of an Irish Puritanism – the existence of a Puritan movement as opposed to the existence of Irish Puritan individuals – is therefore to participate in a debate that stretches at least as far back as the early seventeenth century. Marked Protestants in the sixteenth-century Church of Ireland were generally English imports into the hierarchy. By the early decades of the seventeenth century, the pragmatic breadth they exploited had become a breadth of principle, as Protestants engaged in a vigorous struggle to maintain the independence of the Irish church and to define its constitution in such a way as to frustrate Laudian demands for greater conformity. The identification of a Puritan movement in the north-east – with its distinctive patterns of communal piety in the revivalist preaching and 'communion seasons' that would come to define the Presbyterian tradition – is a signal that this Reformed consensus had begun to break down.

The emergence of a Puritan movement in Wales is perhaps less obvious. Wales had been effectively subsumed into an expanding England. In the sixteenth century, the theological complexion of the Welsh church did not reflect distinctive patterns of ethnic or sectarian distribution, nor was there any need or opportunity to define a theological platform in independence of the Church of England. Like the situation in Ireland, religious life in the principality was far from encouraging: Wales's reputation as a 'dark corner of the land' stretched as far back as the Middle Ages. In the sixteenth century, aggressive Protestantism had few adherents, though individual Puritans were certainly able to make their mark.

The development of a Welsh Puritan movement was therefore related to wider religious trends in the region. Perhaps the most significant was the provision of vernacular scripture: Welsh speakers were provided with a Bible in 1588, one century before the publication of the entire Bible in Irish. Its publication meant that Welsh became the only non-state language in Protestant Europe to have a printed Bible within a century of the Reformation. But this translating activity took place within a context of firm support for the establishment. Other activists for vernacular religious publication were more critical of the ecclesiastical status quo. John Penry of Breconshire, for example, gained fame for his opposition to bishops and was hanged in 1593, becoming the first martyr of later nonconformity.⁴ There is some evidence that radical ideas like those represented by Penry grew in popularity in specific regions. In the early seventeenth century, Puritan influence was concentrated in and around Wrexham, Cardiff and Monmouthshire. These regional groups appear isolated and marginal in the remote and rural culture of early modern Wales for, as late as the 1630s, the English monarchy could depend on widespread Welsh support, for example in the maintenance of Charles I's eleven years of 'personal rule'. Charles's relationships with Wales were significantly easier than those with Scotland or Ireland, for in Wales there was no tradition of organised dissent.

Nevertheless, radical opinion grew more organised in Wales as Puritan preachers in London began to agitate for and sometimes participate in vernacular preaching tours of the principality. Welsh church-goers had generally conformed to state Protestantism, though they had rarely heard it expounded in their native language. Paradoxically, in Ireland, where from the early seventeenth century vernacular preaching was being promoted by influential members of the hierarchy and by teaching staff in Trinity College, the new faith struggled to find a

foothold. In Ireland, even in the 1650s, it was the older Episcopalians, rather than the younger dissenters, who engaged most vigorously in native evangelism. In Wales, vernacular preaching only really took off in the 1640s, when London radicals, encouraged by the recent emergence of two gathered churches, clustered around MPs like Sir Robert Harley in a bid to organise the evangelisation of their native land. This concern for vernacular evangelism seems inversely related to the extent of native conversions. In Ireland, where Puritan vernacular preaching had a long tradition among clergy of the established church, native conversions appear to have been generally restricted to the north-east, where dissenting Presbyterians were engaged in the vigorous re-shaping of cultural life and were forming a movement of their own. In Wales, where Puritan vernacular preaching only really took off in the 1640s, its more radical exponents found their ideas more generally received.

As the need for vernacular preaching suggests, both Ireland and Wales were represented as 'dark corners' where the light of true godliness had yet to shine. Preachers in Wales and Ireland laboured with the related difficulties of cultural, religious and political difference. The Puritan imagination drew freely on images of Welshness and Irishness associated with the London stage. The famous 'four captains' scene of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, for example, had established the stock characteristics of the stage Irish- and Welshman for the benefit of a metropolitan audience. Puritan pamphlet literature regularly lampooned and caricatured the life of the Celtic periphery. But, as the 1630s moved into the 1640s, and conflict in Scotland hinted at the dangers to come, this ironic reduction was replaced by a growing sense of the political danger of these unreformed – and largely royalist – hinterlands.

That danger was emphasised in 1641, when native populations in the north-east and then throughout Ireland erupted in violent rebellion against their Protestant overlords. The rebellion was initially driven by ethnic contest, with rebels apparently overlooking their Scottish neighbours to concentrate their attentions on English landowners. But it quickly developed the contours of a confessional struggle, pitting planted Protestants against native Catholics as Ireland again became England's nemesis. One Presbyterian minister looked back on the rebellion as marking the boundaries of an emerging movement. Puritans had not suffered unduly in the 1641 rising, because, Patrick Adair explained, 'providence so ordered it that what destruction the rebels made . . . fell upon those alone who were not Puritans (as the more religious and stricter sort of the people were then nick-named)'; 'those called Puritans' had 'escaped the stroke, having before the rebellion

generally repaired to England and Scotland to evite [avoid] the sharp persecution of the Bishops'.⁵

As the Irish rebellion spiralled into civil war throughout the three kingdoms, Ireland's danger remained an uncontested assumption, while Wales's situation in the Puritan imagination became more complex. The Welsh were not Catholics, but misguided Protestants. There was much greater cause for hope for their redemption. Parliamentary ordinances pressed for greater severity against Irish than Welsh soldiers, but in the torrent of pamphlet literature that emerged from the London press it was perhaps the Welsh, rather than the Irish, who bore the brunt of the period's ethnic suspicions.⁶ Paradoxically, despite reports of atrocities and the sudden influx of refugees from Ireland, the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, from January 1642 to May 1643, saw more pamphlets attacking Wales and the Welsh than Ireland and the Irish. Popular hostility to Welsh culture appears to have declined fairly quickly thereafter – at the same time as popular hostility to the native Irish noticeably increased – even though Wales had also become a site of contention in the second Civil War. The Irish were dangerous, this literature admitted, but the Welsh were fools. Reports of the cowardice of Welsh soldiers among the royalist forces at the battle of Naseby confirmed this perception of mercurial unreliability. Nevertheless, it was the Protestant allegiance and military failure of the Welsh troops that may have saved their land from the programme of conquest and ethnic cleansing that attended the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland.

PURITANISM IN CROMWELLIAN IRELAND AND WALES

Cromwellian victories ensured a sustained push for Reformation in both Ireland and Wales throughout the 1650s. In Ireland, radical Protestants began to appropriate the term 'Puritan' for their own purposes, using it, as they reflected on the past, as a badge of identity capable of uniting reforming Protestants across a broad spectrum of theological and ecclesiological preferences. The 'P-word' was capable of identifying a wide range of Protestant orthodoxies that distinguished the godly, from Quakers to Covenanters, from the latitudinarianism of the Anglican prelates and the superstitions of Rome. But the very breadth of the term made it controversial, as 'Puritans' of many kinds mounted mutually incompatible programmes to re-model the Irish church. There were repeated attempts to police the boundaries of the movement. Protestants across the theological and political spectrum agreed that 'Puritan' was an apt description for the godly; but their definition of

'Puritan' varied according to the breadth of orthodoxy they were willing to admit. For the Ulster Presbyterians, for example, true Covenanters were the only 'Puritans'; other clergy were 'unlawful ministers' whose activities posed a direct threat to the social reformation the Scots expounded. (At the same time, the three-kingdom context raises the question of whether Ulster Presbyterians can be described as 'Puritans' if the term can be applied only with difficulty to their co-religionists in Scotland.)⁷

The term was certainly appropriated by their radical brethren in the south. Throughout the 1650s there were tense relationships between Puritans and other conservative Protestants, and internecine conflicts among Puritans themselves. Although the Cromwellian reformation was dominated by Puritans, the religious culture of the period defies any collective categorisation. Theological debates in the period tended to agree that the 'Bible only' provided the model for reform; but theologians in the 1650s disagreed as to whether the older episcopal settlements gave sufficient guidance as to what those biblical norms ought to be. At times, Cromwellian Protestants were working at cross-purposes. Some leading members of the civilian elite were attempting to fashion a broad, pan-denominational consensus – Samuel Winter's Dublin and Leinster association, for example, provided a mechanism by which Presbyterians and Independents could unite, and evidently provided a home for others, like Winter himself, who were strongly drawn to the older Anglican liturgical and sacramental forms. Other groups promoted their own cause in isolation from their peers – Baptists, debating among themselves the extent to which they might cooperate with paedobaptists; Covenanters, who dismissed those clergy operating outside their control as contributing to the religious chaos the covenants had been determined to resist; and underground erastians, like the Cork association, an association of clergy which emerged during a conflict about the necessity for episcopal ordination and who only embraced Presbyterianism, as they admitted after the Restoration, to prevent 'wolves' attacking the flock. Whatever their denominational or pan-denominational aspirations, each of these groups policed their boundaries with care. All these groups found favour, at various stages, with the Cromwellian authorities; but not all of them pressed for further reformation with the same vigour. Clear differences remained, even among those groups who adhered to the theology of the Westminster Confession; and even among the 'Old Protestants', representatives of the religious communities that pre-dated the Cromwellian invasion, who were moving into political dominance at the end of the Cromwellian

interlude. One of their parties, the Cork association, maintained obvious continuity with and sympathy for the Anglican past; the other party, the Ulster Presbyterians, was determined to destroy prelacy in root and branch. Neither denominational terms, classifications based on confessional adherence, nor the term 'Puritan' can adequately deal with the range of Protestant thought in Cromwellian Ireland. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the spectrum of Puritan options was narrower in Ireland than in England, and perhaps even than in Wales. Puritans in Ireland did not develop any indigenous movements, and were generally slow to embrace the more radical of the movements that jumped across the Irish Sea. But there were those in the Puritan 'mainstream' who defended the rights of their radical brethren. Indeed, when the term 'Puritan' was used in the 1650s, it was generally invested with very precise nostalgia. Quakers were defended from Cromwellian persecution on the basis that they, as fellow 'Puritans', had suffered the wrath of the bishops with others of the godly.

The situation was somewhat different in Wales. The first signs of an indigenous movement in Wales came with the gathering of the first Congregational church, established by William Wroth (1576–1641) in Llanfaches, Monmouthshire, in 1639. It was a significant location, close to the English border and the Puritan centre at Bristol, and the church certainly benefited from the assistance of a wide community of Puritans in its early days, when Walter Cradock and Henry Jessey moved to the area to assist with the fledgling congregation. But Puritan propaganda certainly emphasised the need of the reformation the gathering of the church seemed to presage. While a Welsh-language Bible had been produced, Vavasor Powell complained, there were serious problems with its distribution. In 1646, Powell claimed that there were not enough Bibles to provide one for every 500 families. But even as he made his complaint, Welsh saints were already benefiting from parliament's dispatch of two vernacular preachers in 1644. These preachers, Ambrose Mostyn and Morgan Llwyd, were joined by Powell in 1648. Under their significant influence, Puritan congregations expanded throughout the Interregnum from two to number several dozen.⁸ In 1649, the first Welsh Baptist church was founded by John Miles in Ilston, in the Gower peninsula. But these Welsh Puritans were generally much less interested in denominational or ecclesiastical precision than were their brethren in Ireland. Powell, most famously, personifies this ecclesiological ambiguity – although re-baptised as an adult, he refused to allow theologies of baptism to define the boundaries of the church, and worked as an independent itinerant preacher, ministering in a wide variety of pastoral

situations – a flexibility that few of his brethren in Ireland, Baptist or paedobaptist, could countenance.

The activities of these preachers were consolidated by the 1650 Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel.⁹ The Propagation Act was used to bring light to the 'dark corner', investigating and ejecting those clergy less sympathetic to the new cause. Its emissaries – Powell in particular – were responsible for the ejection of 278 clergy between 1650 and 1653. In place of the ejected conformists, the Propagation Act promoted regular vernacular preaching. Its supporters also emphasised the importance of godly literature. Between 1647 and 1653, Powell and Cradock oversaw the dissemination of over 3,000 copies of the Welsh New Testament and 6,000 copies of the Welsh Bible, in a move without parallel in Ireland. The Act was also used to establish sixty-three new schools, co-educational institutions that used English exclusively as a medium and which aimed to disseminate the new religious values. Contemporaries recognised the Act's immediate success. Cromwell hailed the advances: 'God did kindle a seed there indeed hardly to be paralleled since the primitive times.' Although the scheme lasted no more than three years, it established the personnel and ideas that would guide religious policy in Wales throughout the 1650s, and which explained its success in the face of Irish failure.

Of course, the scheme and its exponents also drew criticism. Accusations repeatedly referred to the material gains of Welsh Puritans. One critic, for example, estimated that Philip Jones's annual income had risen from £20 to £3,000 as a consequence of his promotion of the godly. These criticisms were frequently accompanied by accusations of financial irregularity and even corruption. Fifteen thousand signatures were said to have been appended to a pamphlet from the south of Wales presented to the House of Commons in March 1652 which claimed that £160,000 collected during the Propagation period had gone missing. The pamphlet compelled Cromwell to launch an investigation, which found some evidence of mismanagement though not of wide-scale corruption. But more significantly, the ejected minister Alexander Griffith continued, the Propagation Act was not addressing the spiritual needs of Wales. The ejections of conforming clergy had gone too far, leaving too many parishioners without access to any preaching ministry whatsoever. In early 1654, he claimed that 700 parishes in the 13 counties were still without clergy. There were other signs that the more moderate policies of the Commission for the Approbation of Public Preachers (which followed the Propagation Committee) were not sustaining earlier

growth. By 1660 only one-third of the schools established between 1650 and 1653 were still in existence.

Nevertheless, the interests of the Welsh Puritan movement, if less defined in terms of ecclesiology, were more characterised by the contours of native culture than were the Irish. This ethnic enthusiasm was reflected in the passionate millennialism of the Welsh movement. Welsh millennialists exercised an influence out of proportion to their number: while only four of the Welsh Rump MPs could be described as Fifth Monarchists, they made up one-third of the total number of that group in parliament. Millennial ideas also spread widely in Wales: Vavasor Powell's extensive influence meant that Fifth Monarchy ideas became popular in the north-east. In fact, as the 1650s wore on, Powell's plans for a military rising to oppose the Cromwellian Protectorate were perhaps more concerning to the government than were similar plans of royalist activists. Powell's extensive influence was matched by that of Morgan Llwyd, who in the late 1640s and early 1650s wrote a great deal of poetry heavily influenced by Revelation and published several influential books in Welsh, culminating in *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn* ('The Book of the Three Birds', 1653). But the millennial convictions shared by these preachers also contributed to their division. The Welsh movement divided between those who advocated the church's financial independence of the state (Llwyd) and those who were prepared to accept the state's financial assistance (Powell). Their separation in 1657 indicated that moderates were now outnumbering the radicals. Llwyd in particular seems to have been moving away from radical millennialism in the later 1650s, leaving Powell as an increasingly marginal figure. In fact, each of the fourteen ministers who subscribed to his *Word for God* had abandoned millennialism by 1660. While the Irish movement also moved in a more and more conservative direction throughout the 1650s, reflecting political changes in London, it contained no parallel to the spread of Welsh millennial ideas. John Rogers was the only significant Irish Cromwellian to move into Fifth Monarchism, and he did so after his return to England in 1651. Surrounded by the forces of the Antichrist, Puritans in Ireland responded to the pessimistic urgency of the apocalyptic, but were reluctant to embrace the hope of an impending millennium.

Puritans in Ireland must also have felt that the apocalyptic and millennial modes were founded on the difference of the native other. Welsh millennialism, by contrast, confounded the 'inferiority complex' that some radicals felt about their cultural background. A number of Puritans adopted a Welsh version of Norman Yoke theory and

represented the Welsh as the true original Britons whose destiny was not to desert the true faith. There were more particular ethnic eccentricities: Charles Edwards believed that the Welsh people were directly descended from the lost tribes of Israel, a theory he attempted to prove in *Y Ffydd ddi-ffuant* ('The Unfeigned Faith', 1667); and William Erbery's *Apocrypha* (1652) argued that the New Jerusalem would descend to Wales. Puritans in Ireland also located the native Irish within an eschatological worldview – but their role was clearly as the minions of the Antichrist.

Puritans in Ireland and Wales did not recognise themselves as participating in a pan-Celtic solidarity. Very few of the Puritans in Ireland were actually of native stock, and Welsh Puritans among the Cromwellian troops were among the most vociferous exponents of the forced transplantation of Irish Catholics 'to hell or Connacht', an event that John Morrill has described as the most significant act of ethnic cleansing in European history.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for better or worse, many strong links existed between Puritans in Ireland and Wales.

CONCLUSION

Irish Puritanism changed markedly after 1649, as organised nonconformity spread throughout the districts under English control. Irish Puritans of many kinds retained the movement's sustained potential for disruption – a trend evidenced in the Belfast presbytery's condemnation of the regicide, and Milton's irate reply – but Puritans found it impossible to unite in a single movement. Irish Puritanism was crippled by a complex of 'British' factors, including tense relationships between Scottish Presbyterians and English Parliamentarians, and by tensions within the Parliamentary movement itself. Fundamentally, hesitations about Irish culture, and an only occasional commitment to Irish-language evangelism, meant that the English Puritan movements never transcended their colonial status. Scottish Presbyterians succeeded in creating an indigenous church polity in the north-east of the island, but only because the plantations out of which they emerged were of longer standing than those of the Cromwellians in the south and were, perhaps, in much closer contact with their social base.

Welsh Puritanism developed in much closer relationship to indigenous culture, cultivating ethnic difference and developing an ambitious scheme of vernacular evangelism and publication activity that succeeded in capturing something of the native imagination. With substantial numbers of native converts, and with converts taking a lead in Welsh, Irish and British affairs, church members were afforded the

imaginative space from which later Nonconformity would emerge. Numbers were initially discouraging: in 1661, Powell estimated that he had left 'above 20 gathered Churches'.¹¹ Even in 1716, Wales had only around seventy nonconformist chapels, compared to around one thousand parish churches. These numbers reflect to some extent the impact of the Clarendon Code, and the official opposition that led many Quakers and Baptists in particular into emigration to the New World. It is also the case that later Nonconformity was impacted by the failures as well as the successes of the Puritan movement: the Powell-Llwyd separation set up the divisions that have haunted Nonconformity ever since, with southern Nonconformity being firm in its ecclesiastical foundations, while divisions among leaders in the north have repeatedly stunted the movement's development there. Nevertheless, in the period and beyond, Puritanism took deeper root in Wales than it ever did in Ireland. In fact, it is probably true to claim that Welsh Puritans had far more influence in Cromwellian Ireland than Irish Puritans ever had in Wales.

But both nations presented a formidable challenge to the godly. In 1653, John Tillinghast wondered about the eschatological significance of 'great conversions of late . . . in poor Wales and some parts of Ireland'.¹² Matthew Poole, five years later, dismissed the 'condition of Ireland and Wales' as 'doleful and dismal'.¹³ There is no doubt that Puritans could be responsible for the rhetorical creation of anxiety; but they also knew its cultural power. The Celtic periphery they inhabited had its dangers as well as its opportunities. Colonel Henry Bowen, a Welsh soldier who entered Ireland with Cromwell in 1649, is a case in point. By 1652, he had moved beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy to embrace a combination of antinomianism and deism. He was court-martialled, but while he was still in county Cork, in 1655, his ghost appeared in his Llanelin, Gower, household. For Jones's friend, Morgan Llwyd, the event was profoundly significant. The Celtic margins retained the potential to haunt the Puritan imagination. 'Rem[ember] Bowen of Swanzeý', he jotted in his notebook.¹⁴

Notes

1. For the importance of Scottish religious experience in early modern Ireland, see R. Armstrong, 'Ireland's Puritan revolution? The emergence of Ulster Presbyterianism VII reconsidered', *English Historical Review*, 121 (2006), 1048–74.
2. A. Ford, 'Dependent or independent? The Church of Ireland and its colonial context, 1536–1649', *The Seventeenth Century*, 9 (1995), 169.

- Ford's companion article, 'The Church of Ireland, 1558–1634: a Puritan church?', in A. Ford, J.I. McGuire and K. Milne, eds., *As by Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 52–68, is also relevant to this discussion.
3. [Henry Leslie], *A Full Confutation of the Covenant, Lately Sworne and Subscribed by many in Scotland; Delivered in a Speech, at the Visitation of Downe and Conner, Held in Lisnegarvy the 26th. of September, 1638* (London, 1639), p. 16.
 4. Ussher's interest in Penry is evident in notes made in Oxford MS Barlow 13. I owe this reference to Alan Ford.
 5. Patrick Adair, *A True Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1623–1670)*, ed. W.D. Killen (Belfast, 1866), p. 63.
 6. On this subject, see L. Bowen, 'Representations of Wales and the Welsh during the civil wars and Interregnum', *Historical Research*, 77 (2004), 358–76.
 7. See Margo Todd's chapter in this volume. See also D.G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000), and J. Coffey, 'The problem of Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638', in E. Boran and C. Gribben, eds., *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 66–90.
 8. See, for details of this context, Stephen Roberts, 'Welsh Puritanism in the Interregnum', *History Today*, 41 (1991), 36–41.
 9. See, particularly, S.K. Roberts, 'Propagating the Gospel in Wales: the making of the 1650 Act', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, n. s. 10 (2004), 57–75.
 10. J. Morrill, 'Introduction', in J. Kenyon and J. Ohlmeyer, eds., *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1638–1660* (Oxford, 1998), p. xix.
 11. Vavasor Powell, *Tsofer bepah, or, The Bird in the Cage* (London, 1661), sig. B3r.
 12. John Tillinghast, *Generation-work* (1653), part one, p. 44.
 13. M. Poole, 'Preface', in *A Model for the Maintaining of Students of Choice Abilities at the University* (London, 1658), [sig. A3].
 14. Roberts, 'Welsh Puritanism in the Interregnum', 38. I would like to thank the editors, Robert Armstrong, David Ceri Jones and Alan Ford, for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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10 The problem of Scotland's Puritans

MARGO TODD

After generations of quarrelling amongst English historians about how to define 'Puritan', a set of fundamental criteria is now generally accepted. Whatever the remaining disputes over nuances of the term, most scholars understand Puritans as those within the Protestant state church with an agenda for further protestantisation (or purification) of that church, along several lines. First, because their anti-Catholicism had a particular virulence, they sought to eliminate the 'dregs of popery' remaining in the Church of England – images, symbols, ceremonies, vestments and festivities devoted to saints or markers on the liturgical calendar. Second, they sought a greater stress on preaching, Sabbath observance and the systematic inculcation of biblical knowledge and Reformed theology. Third, they desired an effective moral discipline to create the sort of godly milieu in which full Reformation of the church could happen and (not incidentally) to avert well-deserved divine wrath on sinful communities. The people we label 'Puritans' had a sense of themselves and what they were about, of their own identity as separate from the less godly around them. They had a decidedly elevated spiritual temperature, as the Elizabethan writer Percival Wibun recognised when he declaimed in 1581, 'the hotter sort of Protestants are called Puritans'. Wibun was more careful with his definition than is often credited: he insisted that we 'make but one religion of those that you call Protestants and Puritans'; the latter simply 'join godly knowledge with their zeal' to avoid the sinful lukewarmness of the Laodicean church.¹ Puritans lay along the spectrum of Protestant belief within the English church; by these criteria they were not separatists, though their spiritual fire generated a frequently intolerable warmth. The interior aspect of this fire constitutes a second and vital part of how we define them. Puritans' self-identification as the 'godly' or 'true professors' or 'saints' came at a cost: their commitment to moral reformation in the community was combined with an earnest, incessant, perhaps neurotically obsessive self-examination – a sort of spiritually hypochondriacal

temperature-taking – that left them vulnerable to derision by their neighbours and to caricature by the likes of Ben Jonson. Their piety, often set down in diaries and spiritual autobiographies, also set them sufficiently apart from the less devout multitude to make them recognisable to modern students of religious history.² And it cemented their self-awareness as divinely chosen for greater things. A conviction of election is a powerful drug, as the events of the 1640s would show.

Of course, the term is distinctively English in its origins. Is it then possible to apply it, with this definition, to Scotland? The short answer is yes and no – but then again, yes.

'PURITAN': EPITHET AND BADGE

The first 'yes' in this shamelessly equivocal answer is based on the simple observation that Scots did use the term, of Scots. They used it rarely, and not at all before the 1590s. From that decade on, however, a particular group of Scots employed it as their English counterparts did, as a term of opprobrium. Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St Andrews, complained of Puritans' presbyterian zealotry in 1591; John Tawle had reported to an English correspondent the year before that the kirk was controlled by 'they of the Puritan sort'; and James VI famously warned Prince Henry in 1599 to 'hate no man more than a proud Puritan' and to declare war on 'vain Puritans'.³ For these men, the term had more to do with polity than religious experience, as James made quite clear in his condemnation of the 'anarchy or [ministerial] parity of the Puritans' as opposed to the orderliness of episcopal church government.⁴ The king's ire was directed particularly towards the anti-erastian Andrew Melville and his followers, a group that might best be called 'radical presbyterians', since they sought to abolish episcopal rule altogether as the agent of royal interference in the church. A real thorn in the king's side, the radical presbyterians, mostly ministers, opposed even the 'reduced episcopacy' that after 1581 co-existed with presbyteries in Scotland's hierarchy of Reformed church courts (sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly). At those rare moments when James was more positively disposed to the godly, as in the midst of a Jesuit scare, he avoided the word 'Puritan' in favour of one of the many alternatives more acceptable to those being labelled. In 1608, for instance, he wrote to the notoriously presbyterian magistracy of the royal burgh of Perth to urge cooperation with the General Assembly and to express his thanks that 'within these our dominions' God was pleased 'to receive a handful to himself who have never bowed knee to Baal, . . . true professors'.⁵

In his multiple realms, the Scots could always be relied on to root out Jesuits. James knew how to flatter Puritans when he needed the force of their anti-Catholicism. But this was an exception to his usual presumption that they were the enemy.

By the turn of the century, Scots who wished to abolish presbyteries altogether (a useful shorthand form can be 'radical episcopalians') were making ever more liberal use of 'Puritan' to label their opponents. When Sir Alexander Straton of Lauriston wrote to James in 1605 exulting in Robert Bruce's discharge from the ministry in Edinburgh, he noted that his own role 'as an accuser to make the judgment formal' had brought down upon him 'the Puritans' insupportable malice'.⁶ Archbishop Spottiswoode regularly castigated 'the Puritan faction'.⁷ Lady Pitsligo was branded 'a rank Puritan' for her willingness to allow Covenanting ministers to preach in her courtyard when they were locked out of the city kirks of Aberdeen in 1638, a year whose events John Spalding blamed on 'discontented Puritans'.⁸ By this time, radical presbyterians had managed to win over the General Assembly of the whole kirk to their resolutely anti-episcopalian stance in the wake of Charles I's efforts to impose an English-style prayer book on Scotland, so the range of Scots to whom 'Puritan' could be applied had expanded to include all supporters of the National Covenant. By the 1640s, the term was coin of the realm, finding its place in both prose polemic and anti-Covenanter verse. Samuel Colville lampooned Puritans in his 1643 pasquil:

At first a Puritane Commander
 Nou a forsuorne seditious bander
 Quhill there was houpes for bribes and budding
 Ye courted God for caicke and pudding.

Colville happily consigned such Puritans to the Devil, to serve as diabolical session clerks

For to keepe his Rolles in Hell
 To registrat into his paperes
 The Actes of all religione schetters.⁹

Eventually, as in England, godly Scots embraced the term as a compliment: the preacher Robert Blair boasted of being denounced as a 'Puritan' by the earl of Strafforde in Dublin.¹⁰ Samuel Rutherford assured Alexander Gordon of Earlston that being called 'a favorer of the Puritans and leader to that sect' was like Christ putting 'the garland of suffering for himself first upon your head' – an honour and a promise of the 'crown of life' to come.¹¹ Likewise in the writings of contemporary presbyterian

historians like David Calderwood the 'Puritan' label becomes a badge of honourable persecution for presbyterian critics of bishops (whom Calderwood called 'pretty football men' for their love of recreation rather than discipline).¹²

Clearly the term was well known and used in early seventeenth-century Scotland. In each of these cases, however, 'Puritan' as epithet actually meant 'Melvillian' or 'radical presbyterian'. This brings us to the 'no' of that 'yes and no' answer, since ecclesiastical polity is not a feature of our definition of Puritan at all.

A MIXED POLITY

There was certainly division within the kirk, but was it really between Puritans and the incompletely Reformed establishment, as in England, or was it between radical presbyterians on one side and the king and his radical episcopalian supporters on the other? Was the tension about godliness and reform, or polity and power? If the latter, then 'Puritan' must be a mis-application. A closer look at the actual workings of the kirk's polity suggests that this is the case.

By no means did all Scots bishops approve of the term 'Puritan'; nor did all find objectionable the presbyterians to whom it was applied. Andro Boyd, bishop of Argyll, told Archbishop Spottiswoode in 1629 that besides the bishops of St Andrews, Aberdeen, Moray, Ross and Brechin, he found 'the rest of episcopal society not having great particular cause of opposition' to those 'whom your lordship calls Puritan'. Boyd explicitly rejected Spottiswoode's term '*Puritani*' and urged a more conciliatory approach to radical presbyterian ministers, in line with the practice of most Scots bishops. These included some who themselves surely qualified as Puritans, and as presbyterians of the moderate sort. William Cowper, bishop of Galloway, did not use the term, nor would one expect him to, since he himself fit all of the guidelines. He staunchly opposed ceremonies and images, even braving a royal dressing-down for it in 1617, when as James's chaplain he refused to allow gilded statues of the apostles to be installed in the Chapel Royal. Together with his intense and even visionary piety and his long history of frequent preaching and stern exercise of discipline, such iconophobia surely qualifies him for the label.¹³ Most Scots bishops, at least before the contentious 1630s, were of Cowper's ilk, quite a different sort from Adamson or Spottiswoode. Far from anti-presbyterian, they found the *de facto* presbytery within prelacy of the period after 1581 quite congenial, sitting in presbyteries as 'constant moderators' in the conviction that the Reformed church courts

were the best way to pursue the moral discipline that they sought as earnestly as English Puritans did. Indeed, Stirling presbytery was established by a bishop.¹⁴ Only by the king and a coterie of his episcopal henchmen were those troublesome few (but vocal) presbyterian ministers who opposed any episcopacy at all denominated 'Puritans'. Those radicals shared the English Puritan agenda – anti-papal, iconoclastic, leery of festivity, rigorously sabbatarian, critical of lax ecclesiastical discipline. But so did the bishops moderating presbyteries, and the many moderate presbyterians satisfied to have them there. A survey of the manuscript minute books of sessions, presbyteries and synods from every corner of the realm shows the Reformed courts working away steadily at their caseloads of discipline and at the vetting of prospective ministers, apparently indifferent to whether the presiding officer of presbytery or synod were a bishop or a minister.¹⁵

This was so even after 1618, when the king's pet project, the Perth Articles, with their restoration of kneeling to receive communion, drew the wrath of the presbyterian extremists. Most bishops seem to have studiously neglected their enforcement; in some cases they themselves refused to comply.¹⁶ There was undeniable controversy amongst some clerics about the Articles, but their effects in the localities have been overestimated by historians willing to take contemporary polemicists like Calderwood at face value. Thanks to the effective exercise of a reduced episcopacy within a well-established presbyterian system, the Articles actually caused barely a ripple in either the parishes or the presbyteries, as their minute books show. The kirk before the 1630s was instead markedly irenic.

A PURITAN KIRK?

There is an even more powerful argument against the notion of Puritans in Scotland.

If Puritans were by definition people pursuing the agenda for the full reformation of church and manners, against the opposition of the leaders of an established church only partly protestantised, where are those people in a church that, unlike the Church of England, was by no means 'halfly-reformed'? On the contrary, in the kirk the Puritan agenda was largely accomplished within a generation of the Reformation, at least in the populous Lowlands.¹⁷ Scotland was arguably the archetypal Puritan realm, more thoroughly Reformed in practice than even its Swiss parents. An English-style Puritan opposition would have been hard put to find a single one of their agenda items not ticked off by the kirk.

The Scottish Reformers abolished straightaway not only saints' days, but every marker on the liturgical calendar. Only Sundays remained holy days, together with numerous 'seasons of fasting and humiliation' proclaimed in response to famine, war, storms or pestilence. Even the Swiss Reformers had not managed, like the Scots, to abolish Christmas and Easter.¹⁸ Not until 1645 did English Puritans manage it, and then only *de jure* and very temporarily; but there was no official Christmas in Scotland from 1560 until 1958. Nor did the kirk stop halfway in abandoning clerical vestments: no cassock and surplice need trouble a Scottish Puritan. There is scant evidence that images destroyed in 1559–60 were, as in England, hidden away for future re-use. No altars survived; instead, wooden tables surrounded by benches served for communions. The 'mass-book' service echoed in England's Book of Common Prayer was nowhere to be seen in the Scots' Book of Common Order. Instead, the service consisted simply of a long sermon with psalms and Bible-reading before and after.¹⁹ Anything even vaguely popish in worship had been obliterated. To what could a Puritan possibly object?

An insistence on preaching, catechism and strict Sabbath observance constitute the second mark of a Puritan in our definition, and again, the kirk left little room for complaint. If provision of preaching ministers was at first necessarily deficient, no bishop stood in the way of greater production by the universities, and the General Assembly made it a priority, ensuring that in the meantime parishes were supplied at least with readers to instil biblical knowledge in parishioners. Properly staffed parishes provided not only two sermons on Sundays, together with afternoon catechising, but also weekday sermons. In Perth there were at least five sermons a week – six including the public presbytery sermon on Wednesdays, and even more with daily sermons during fasting seasons.²⁰ Attendance was mandatory, with heavy fines imposed on anyone keeping his shop open or found ploughing or spinning in preaching time, or requiring his servants to labour. And woe betide anyone found golfing, dancing or haunting an alehouse on Sunday.²¹

Sabbath observance was strictly enforced by that most singular force for Reformation in the Calvinist tradition, the parochial court or kirk session. Consisting of a dozen or so lay elders plus the minister in each parish, this court also took on the responsibility to enforce the third element in the Puritans' agenda for church reform – moral discipline of the community. Sessions sent 'searchers' into the parish both to ensure family catechism and to ferret out drunkards, quarrellers and fornicators. They punished offenders with fines and public humiliation on a new

piece of furniture in every Scots church – the seat of repentance. Here fornicators might sit for three Sundays and adulterers for half a year of Sundays, shamed before all the neighbourhood, before confessing their sins and being ‘received back’ into the congregation. Sessions ordered other notorious sinners to wear the branks (like the English scold’s bridle) or stand in the pillory or the joughs (an iron neck-ring chained to the wall).

What is most striking about this system is the amount of cooperation, even enthusiastic participation, that it received from a wide swath of the laity. Ordinary parishioners aided the searchers by reporting their neighbours’ offences. To serious offenders sessions assigned upstanding men and women to serve as ‘cautions’ – sureties for their future good behaviour who agreed to keep a close eye on them or risk very heavy fines should they re-offend. Couples intending to marry also had cautions to prevent them jumping the gun. Thousands of cautions’ names, male and female, appear in session minute books, indicating widespread lay cooperation with church discipline.²² Finally, numerous instances of voluntary confession, in the full expectation of unmitigated punishment to come, suggest that the laity had been genuinely converted to the preachers’ demands for strict moral probity. Two Highlandmen came to the penitents’ seat in Inveravon without having been charged, seeking an opportunity to assuage their guilt. A married Aberdeen couple confessed in the 1590s to sexual intercourse during a fast – not a sin that would have come to light without voluntary confession. Others turned in diaries of their secret sins.²³ In the Protestant mission church at Bangor in County Down, a voluntary penitent appeared ‘sore weeping several days, to the great edification of the whole congregation’ so that ‘sundry others willingly submitted themselves’.²⁴ A final bit of evidence comes from recent analysis of the parish registers and session minute books of Perth: while scholars often presume that fornication confessions were necessarily compelled by pregnancy, the actual pregnancy rate for 1570s and 1580s fornication cases in this parish averages just 17 per cent.²⁵ A combination of vigilantly spying neighbours and the guilt instilled by forceful preaching had clearly had an effect.

After the establishment of presbyteries, enforcement of parochial discipline was ensured by a national network of oversight and authority, with the kirk’s censures imposed even on the well-born.²⁶ A sinner trying to avoid censure by moving to another parish found that the new session demanded a testimonial of orthodoxy and good behaviour from the old one. Presbyterianism allowed no escape. So complete was the

resulting reformation of manners that even the most earnest of the ministers boasted in 1618, 'other kirks abroad . . . have not been favoured with [our] measure of reformation; . . . the Lord hath been more liberal to us and requireth of us that we give example and encouragement to them to aspire to our perfection'.²⁷ In light of all this, it is tempting to call the entire realm of Scotland a 'Puritan nation', rather than one divided into Puritans and moderates, or Puritans and conformists. The kirk had achieved a parochial discipline of which English Puritans could only dream. Even the Swiss Reformed churches had no penitents' seats, no cautions, no such systematic searchers. Scotland was Geneva writ very large, and extended well beyond a city and its environs, to a nation.

Herein lies the problem with using the expression 'Scottish Puritanism'. If Puritans are a group *within* a state church pushing for *further* reformation, a group that understood itself in opposition to the *halfway* Reformation of the authorities and the worldly masses, then it has no meaning for a state church thoroughly Reformed. Of course, this does not mean that all Scots behaved like Puritans: sinners, like the poor, ye have always with you. It does mean, though, that Puritan standards and the mechanisms to enforce them were officially in place and functioning effectively. It means that the outward forms of worship, of marking time, of demonstrating biblical understanding and doctrinal orthodoxy, were well established along the most rigorous of Protestant lines, and that no whiff of popery polluted the clear air of Scotland's parishes. In terms of institutional reform, 'Puritans' had nothing left to do except defend what was already in place – as they covenanted to do in 1638. 'Puritan' is thus for Scotland stripped of its most basic meaning.

SPIRITUALITY

Or is it? The reader will recall that the already complicated 'yes and no' answer given above was further convoluted with a 'then again, yes' coda. The latter part of our definition of 'Puritan', beyond the agenda for church reform, had to do with heat. If 'Puritan' is taken to indicate unusually fervent Protestant religiosity entailing anxious self-scrutiny for signs of election, along with individual devotion to sermons, Bible-reading and prayer, then its presence in the kirk as in the Church of England was very real – and obnoxious to those not so inclined. Whether in the absence of the rest of the definition we should use the term with this restricted meaning is up for debate, but there *was* a hierarchy of piety within even the rigorously disciplined, theologically informed, more often than not fasting folk of Scotland. Quite apart from those of

the rude multitude who occupied the penitents' seats or wore the branks and joughs, the upright sort were divided by evident degrees and varieties of devotion, just as they were in England. Scholars can easily identify individuals who were aware of themselves as the remnant of God's elect within the mass of the unregenerate or hypocritical (whose religion, however strenuous, was mere outward performance). They include earnest enforcers of the kirk's discipline (though not all elders would qualify), presbyterians and bishops (though not all of either), laity and clerics, women and men. The contemporary equation of Puritan with presbyterian clearly will not suffice: this is a broadly inclusive category that defies the received version of division by church polity.

The hotter sort can be identified by their actions and their writings. They include the exiled ministers of the 1580s, pious autobiographers like Mistress Rutherford, keepers of spiritual diaries like the episcopalian John Forbes of Corse, missionaries to Antrim and Down like Robert Blair and John Livingstone, visionary bishops like Cowper, and the numerous women who penned religious verse or anguished missives to charismatic preachers seeking their guidance in spiritual matters. All evinced the heightened internal spiritual temperature and compulsion to spread the fever that characterises Puritans. They shared an intensely affective piety, a wrenching anxiety over election and struggles for assurance, and a pronounced sense of this life as a pilgrimage.²⁸ A brief sampling from their busy pens illustrates their fervour.

The conversion narrative of Mistress Rutherford (no relation to Samuel) is a classic outpouring of the emotional highs and lows of Puritan experimental religion: her fears of the Devil's real presence are palpable, as is her distress when she fails to resist temptation, however trivial. Who but a Puritan child would confess as sin that 'after the sermon was done I spent the rest of the day in playing with the rest of the bairns, so great was the strength of my corruption and impenitence'. On the other hand, her rapture when she perceived divine presence was as extreme, as when (still a child) she 'sat down upon my knees and prayed to God, . . . [and] was ravished and taken up with joy that I cannot express, so that at that time I may say I tasted of the powers of the world to come'.²⁹ Robert Blair also reported a childhood conversion: by age seven 'the Lord early owned me' and 'caused my conscience to reflect upon me with this query, "Wherefore servest thou, unprofitable creature?"'. This was followed by just as extreme an emotional roller-coaster as Rutherford's life proved. God 'caused me to sigh many love sighs', fed 'the vehemence of my rejoicing' and provided 'divine raptures and lifting up on high', but also required 'soul-humiliation and

self-judging meditations' and caused him to experience 'saddest down-castings, desertions, obstructions, . . . great deadness and faints'.³⁰ What Robert Bruce called 'the feeling spiritual' might today be labelled bipolar disorder.³¹

The writing of spiritual accounts derived from the Puritan commitment to unrelenting, deeply probing self-examination. John Forbes of Corse told believers 'to be continually searching and trying our own hearts lest there lurk in them any deceitfulness to beguile us', and his own diary provides a model.³² Blair reported in 1622 that

diligent Christians . . . daily took brief notes of the condition of their souls, marking both what failings and escapes they were overtaken with, as also what speed they came and progress they made in the ways of God. I followed the same course, in some passages using a dark way of writing, and kept it up about sixteen years, so that every Lord's day the notes of the preceding week were considered and laid to heart, . . . and at the end of the year a view taken of the whole.

English Puritan diarists like Samuel Ward would have found nothing to quarrel with here.³³

Perhaps the ultimate indicator of how hot the hotter sort were was the response that they got from their less fevered neighbours. Samuel Rutherford, like Lucy Hutchinson in England, claimed that the 'Puritan' label referred not to his anti-episcopacy, but to his 'strict and precise walking with God in everything', which irritated his critics no end. Hutchinson complained that 'whoever was zealous for God's glory or worship, could not endure blasphemous oaths, ribald conversation, profane scoffs, sabbath breach, derision of the word of God, and the like, whoever could endure a sermon, . . . or anything that was good, all these were Puritans'. Her judgement would have sounded very familiar to any pious Scot.³⁴ The difficulty was that such strictness, coupled with an apparently irresistible urge to compel everybody else to match it, tended to make Puritans difficult companions. It was one thing for Blair and his fellow precisian William Castlclaw to boast that on their walk to Dumbarton 'for the most part of the way (it being ten miles) we did cheerfully sing psalms'. It was quite another when on a 1637 sea journey from Leith to France, Blair tried to impose his godliness on his shipmates, Gaels recruited for service in Colonel Hepburn's regiment: when he 'began to rebuke them for swearing and cursing, one of the Highlanders pulled out his dirk, vowing to stab' him. (Blair prudently disembarked at the earliest opportunity.)³⁵

The perceived hypocrisy of those who, for all their self-righteous demeanour, themselves succumbed to sins of the flesh, gave all the more purchase to critics of the hotter sort. Scots poets had as great a field day with the self-proclaimed godly in the kirk as Ben Jonson did with Zeal-of-the-Land Busy at Bartholomew Fair. Margaret Robertson of Bonskeid in Perthshire targeted in one of her bawdier poems 'ane Puritane . . . and also ane holie brother' who even 'in catischisame seat' indulged his lust. The object of his desire, a lass 'he wald have usit',

ane bab of grace
And child of reformatione
Held using in disgrace
Ane line of profanatioune
For that place

But she resisted to no avail. The lecherous Puritan

swore though she said no
He wald of no denyell . . .
With this he layed hir doune
The sprit it fell in working
Hir zeall it fell in found
He edified hir mercing
Up and downe.³⁶

Robertson the rhymmer was given to this sort of thing, though no less to more pious verse: critics of the *hubris* in Puritan self-styling were not necessarily of the rude multitude. The occasional scandalous sins of preachers, in particular, lent grist to their mill: Samuel Rutherford's notorious ante-nuptial fornication doubtless drew a chuckle from Margaret Robertson.³⁷

That Puritans drew such vituperation north as well as south of the Tweed is hardly surprising. Neither is the fact that the same epithet was applied on both sides. Scotland's southern border was porous, and the output of English printing presses filled Scottish booksellers' booths. And on both sides of the border, many found the hotter sort unbearable. The only difference was that in the northern realm Puritans had achieved for the state church the system of discipline that Antipuritans in England so feared. After 1638, that system made it all the easier to enroll the nation in the Covenant.

In the end some may grant that James VI and his cohort were right about there being Puritans in Scotland, though the king's own definition was surely too narrow. Within the kirk there was a hotter sort.

Anxiety-ridden, self-castigating and painfully pious, they were often so worried that the kirk had fallen away from earlier purity, or might stray from it, that their ceaseless moralising made them a plague to their neighbours. Insistently raising an already very high bar, they could not but draw the ire not only of the rude multitude but also of the upright but less fiery. Already sorely taxed by the demands of a thoroughly Reformed disciplinary system, Scots Protestants recognised within their midst the spiritually extremist, just as James and Spottiswoode did the radical presbyterians who formed part of that group.

All told, then, the language of 'Puritans' even within a Puritan state church does have something to offer. If we are willing either to ignore that part of the definition that has Puritans demanding further reform of the church, or to re-write that bit for a victorious rather than beleaguered Puritan movement, then we can find Puritans in Scotland. They will be either the spiritually hotter sort, fitting the second part of the definition, or the whole kirk, fitting the first part. There is something to be said for having one's haggis and eating it, too. For those who insist on the whole of the accepted definition, however, neither the 'Puritan' of the king and radical episcopalians, nor 'Puritan' equated to the hotter sort quite makes the grade. Those committed to the strict definition will do best to leave 'Puritans' in England.

Notes

1. Percival Wiburn, *A Checke or Reproofe of M. Howlet's Untimely Shreeching . . . with an Answer to the Reasons Alleadged in a Discourse thereunto Annexed, Why Catholikes . . . Refuse to Goe to Church* (London, 1581), fol. 15v, noting Revelation 3:16.
2. Other chapters in this volume deal with the thorny issue of definition, so it is not necessary to rehearse here the voluminous historiography of the subject. Wiburn's definition is also noted by P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 27.
3. *Viri Clarissimi A Melvini Musae et P Adamson Vita et Palindomia* [sic] *et Celsae Commissionis ceu Delegatae Potestatis Regiae in Causis Ecclesiasticis Brevis & Aperta Descriptio* ([Amsterdam?], 1620), p. 4 (I am grateful to Jamie Reid Baxter for this reference); Lambeth Palace Library ms 2014, fol. 190v, and ms 3471, fol. 57; *Basilikon Doron*, ed. J. Craigie (Edinburgh, 1944), pp. 70, 80–1. Additional examples can be found in J. Coffey, 'The problem of "Scottish Puritanism", 1590–1638', in E. Boran and C. Gribben, eds., *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 66–90.
4. *The Political Works of James I*, ed. C.H. McIlwain (Cambridge, MA, 1918), p. 126.

5. Perth and Kinross County Archives ms B59/16/1, fol. 180. Perth's kirk had been the meeting place for the local presbytery since its founding in 1578 (before the official establishment of presbyteries in Scotland in 1581), with the active support of the town council: National Archives of Scotland [NAS] mss CH2/521/1, pp. 23, 44, 65; CH2/299/1-2 (Perth Presbytery minutes to 1647). In all quotes in this chapter, poetry and titles excepted, spelling is modernised and the Scots anglicised for the reader's convenience.
6. D. Laing, ed., *Original Letters Relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs of Scotland, from 1603 to 1625*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1851), I. 15.
7. John Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1847-51), II. 262.
8. John Spalding, *The History of the Troubles . . . from 1624 to 1645*, ed. J. Skene, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1828-9), I. 94.
9. National Library of Scotland [NLS] ms Adv 19.3.8, fol. 45, transcribed by Jamie Reid Baxter and quoted with permission.
10. Robert Blair, *The Life of Mr Robert Blair . . . containing His Autobiography*, ed. T. M'Crie (Edinburgh, 1848), p. 99.
11. *Letters of the Rev. Samuel Rutherford*, ed. A. A. Bonar (New York, 1881), p. 104. Rutherford uses the term frequently: e.g. pp. 43, 424 ('we be nicknamed Puritans' but 'shall be in Scotland as a green olive tree, and a field blessed of the Lord').
12. 'Puritan' recurs often in Calderwood's *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson and D. Laing, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842-9), e.g. VII. 259, 507, 508, 534; quote from p. 210.
13. NLS ms Wodrow Qu CIV, fol. 119v, Boyde to Spottiswoode, from Dunoon, 22 September 1629 (with thanks again to Jamie Reid Baxter); M. Todd, 'Bishops in the kirk: William Cowper of Galloway and the Puritan episcopacy of Scotland', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 57 (2004), 300-12. Cowper was rebuked by James VI for refusing to kneel at communion after passage of the Perth Articles (1618) required kneeling: William Cowper, *Workes* (London, 1629), p. 1090; Calderwood, *The Kirk of Scotland*, VII. 245 (letter to Patrick Simson, minister of Stirling, 1617).
14. The General Assembly of April 1581 assigned Bishop Andrew Graham of Dunblane and Robert Montgomery, minister of Stirling and later archbishop of Glasgow to set up the presbytery: *Booke of the Universall Kirk*, ed. Thomas Thomson, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1839-45), II. 487. For bishops in presbyteries, see Todd, 'Bishops in the kirk', 301-2.
15. M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002).
16. Cowper, *Workes*, p. 163; Calderwood, *The Kirk of Scotland*, VII. 247.
17. For Reform in the Highlands and Isles, see J. Dawson, 'Calvinism in the Gaidhealtachd in Scotland', in *Calvinism in Europe 1540-1620*, ed. A. Pettegree, A. Duke and G. Lewis (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 231-53; and Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots* (Cambridge, 2002).

18. *Zurich Letters*, ed. H. Robinson (Cambridge, 1842–5), pp. 362–3. Local survivals of religious festivals can be found, but they were rare and were gradually phased out by the Reformed parochial courts while new secular festivities emerged to replace them: M. Todd, 'Profane pastimes and the Reformed community: the persistence of popular festivities in early modern Scotland', *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), 123–56.
19. *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, Commonly Known as Knox's Liturgy*, ed. G. Sprott (Edinburgh, 1868).
20. NAS mss CH2/521/2, fols. 112, 114v; CH2/521/3, p. 100; CH2/521/7, pp. 250–2; CH2/299/1, p. 318; CH2/299/2, pp. 43, 50, 54, 112; Cowper, *Workes*, p. 5.
21. Todd, *Culture*, ch. 1 (pp. 24–83).
22. For example, in the Perth minutes for 1580, in 34 pages of text with 205 entries, 111 cautions are named: NAS ms CH2/521/1, pp. 66–100. Only rarely did anyone decline to serve as a caution. For penitential conventions in the kirk, see Todd, *Culture*, pp. 127–82.
23. Todd, *Culture*, pp. 170–1 lists these and other examples.
24. Blair, *Life*, pp. 68–9.
25. NAS ms CH2/521/1, pp. 1–174. The calculations will be discussed in the introduction to my edition of the *Perth Kirk Session Minutes, 1577–1587* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, forthcoming).
26. M. Graham, 'Equality before the Kirk? Church discipline and the elite in Reformation-era Scotland', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 84 (1993), 289–309.
27. NLS ms Wod. Fol. XXVII, fols. 23, 24v, a letter of the particular kirks to the kirk in Edinburgh.
28. These subjects are brilliantly analysed by D.G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000).
29. 'Mistress Rutherford's conversion narrative', ed. D. Mullan, in *Scottish History Society Miscellany XIII* (Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 146–88, quotes at pp. 154, 153.
30. Blair, *Life*, pp. 4–5, 18, 125, 127.
31. Robert Bruce, *Sermons*, ed. W. Cunningham (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 393.
32. NAS ms CH12/18/6, p. 58.
33. Blair, *Life*, p. 31; cf. Samuel Ward's diary, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, ms 45, and M. Todd, 'Puritan self-fashioning', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), pp. 236–64.
34. J. Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 18 (and for Rutherford's spirituality, pp. 82–97); cf. Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel John Hutchinson*, ed. N.H. Keeble (London, 1995), p. 64.
35. Blair, *Life*, pp. 50, 152.
36. NLS ms 15937, fols. 150v–151, from a transcription by Sebastiaan Verweij, who is examining this manuscript for his Glasgow Ph.D. thesis, "'The Inlegebill scribbling of my Imprompt pen": production and circulation of literary manuscripts in Jacobean Scotland 1570–1625'.

The meaning of 'mercing' here is uncertain, but the overall sense of the verse is clear enough.

37. Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, pp. 37–8.

Further reading

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II Practical divinity and spirituality

CHARLES E. HAMBRICK-STOWE

Puritans from the latter decades of the sixteenth through to the early seventeenth centuries dedicated themselves to the theological and spiritual renewal of the church in England. While Puritanism was rooted in traditional strains of English and Catholic piety, its theological shape was influenced early in the Reformation by published works of Reformed theologians on the continent and by the presence of Martin Bucer (1491–1551), a leading Reformer in Switzerland and southern Germany following the death of Ulrich Zwingli, as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University from 1549 until his death. The essential Calvinism of the Puritan movement was reinforced by the memory, kept alive by John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, of martyrdom under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary (reigned 1553–8) and exile in Frankfurt, Strasbourg and Calvin's Geneva. The English Bible translated while in exile, known as the Geneva Bible, was published (1560) with verse numbers and marginal notes that made it the most widely used Bible among Puritans even after the appearance of the Authorised Version in 1611. Fellowship with Reformed theologians in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, throughout the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) further ensured that members of this English branch of the Reformed family participated fully in the international Reformed movement, intent on moving the Church of England in Calvinist directions in every way possible.

The influence of Puritan-friendly bishops in the Elizabethan church, high-profile Puritan theologians teaching at the universities, especially Cambridge, and well-known preachers in significant parishes enabled Puritans to imagine the Church of England as a leader in the international phalanx of Reformed churches. Clergy who nurtured small groups of spiritually zealous saints within their parishes included some whose goal was a presbyterian national church; others who envisioned a congregational ecclesiology within, alongside, or perhaps separate from the established church; and still others intent on serving faithfully

within the existing hierarchical system of episcopacy and traditional parishes. In the full range of Puritan programmatic visions, the work of theology was inseparable from ecclesiastical reform, the moral reformation of society and the revival of piety at the personal and family levels. Indeed, Puritans as theologians did not consider personal spiritual experience and the reform of church and society to be theologically derivative or secondary – as if they were mere applications of theology – but considered them at the heart of the theological enterprise. This approach gave rise to a distinctively Puritan version of Reformed theology noted for personal and corporate engagement of believers in disciplined lives of godliness.

One eminent theoretician, ‘the Learned Doctor’ William Ames (1576–1633), gave classic expression to Puritan theology in his seminal work, *Medulla Theologiae* (delivered as lectures in 1620–2, with the first Latin edition published in 1623, and translated into English in 1643 as *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* and in the twentieth century as *The Marrow of Theology*). Ames was especially significant for linking great early Puritan theologians like Richard Greenham (early 1540s–1594), Richard Rogers (1551–1618) and William Perkins (1558–1602) with the generation of preachers coming of age in the early seventeenth century, some of whom would migrate to New England. In the chorus of theologians in the movement his voice was considered pitch-perfect by peers and by many who followed.

Ames received bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Cambridge University, where in 1601 he began to teach, was ordained and experienced conversion under the preaching of Perkins. Following the Puritan practice of refusing to wear the required vestments of the Church of England and avoiding use of the Book of Common Prayer in worship, Ames and others soon ran afoul of the authorities. After a 1609 sermon in which he denounced gambling, his ecclesiastical standing and academic degrees were suspended and, the next year, he emigrated to the Netherlands. There Ames worked as a chaplain, tutored, conferred with John Robinson (pastor of the ‘Pilgrim’ congregation that would settle in Plymouth, New England), wrote vigorously in defence of Reformed orthodoxy against Arminianism and participated in the Synod of Dort (1618–19). In 1622 he became professor of theology at the University of Franeker, where he wrote *Medulla Theologiae* and his other great work, *De Conscientia*, in which ‘cases of conscience’ guide the practice of godliness. Only his untimely death prevented him from joining the Puritan Great Migration to New England, where these books as well as his arguments supporting congregational ecclesiology were highly

influential. Ames's widow did subsequently make her home in Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Ames defined theology as 'the doctrine or teaching of living to God'. Theological knowledge, utterly dependent on revelation, is distinguished from other kinds of human knowledge that 'can be developed through sense perception, observation, experience, and induction'. Theology, nevertheless, is connected with human life because like 'every art [it] has its rules to which the work of the person practicing it corresponds'. Placing the seat of religious knowledge in the will rather than the intellect, Ames held that 'since this life so willed is truly and properly our most important practice, it is self-evident that theology is not a speculative discipline but a practical one'. Every topic of theology relates to the call to 'live in accord with the will of God' in this life and the next – 'all of which refer directly to practice'. Following the logic of Petrus Ramus, whose method, widely adopted by Puritans, integrated theory and practice, Ames classified the two parts of theology as 'faith' and 'observance'. The first part treats the doctrines of God, the Fall, the person and work of Christ, and redemption, while placing emphasis on 'the application of redemption' – that is, 'the making effectual, in certain men, of all those things which Christ has done and does as mediator'. Ames consistently focuses on experience and practice. Following chapters on 'justification and adoption, which relate to the relative change of state for believers', he describes sanctification as 'the real change, wherein justification is manifested and its consequences, so to speak, brought into being'. Sanctification is a lifelong experience 'pertaining to the whole man and not to any one part', a process of 'change in a believer in which he has righteousness and indwelling holiness imparted to him'. Actual transformation occurs in the lives of believers as a gradual process, for only at 'the end of the world' in God's kingdom 'the application which has only been begun in this life will be perfected'. Ames dedicates the second part of the *Medulla* then to the life of obedient 'performance of the will of God for the glory of God'. Such theological 'observance' incorporates, using Ramist dichotomy, two main fields, the personal practice of 'religion' ('holiness' or spirituality) and the outward work of 'justice and charity' or public 'righteousness'.¹

By the 1620s when Ames was at the height of his career, the blend of meditative piety and public godliness he put forth was firmly fixed in the practical theology that characterised the Puritan movement. Fifty years earlier, Richard Greenham pioneered this theological approach and intensive form of ministry in his parish at Dry Drayton, Cambridgeshire,

where, after graduation from the University, he began serving in 1570. Richard Rogers, who heard Greenham preach at Cambridge and visited his manse during the early 1570s as a master's student, may have been the first to systematise Puritanism's emerging practical divinity. In the early 1580s Rogers was a leading advocate of presbyterian polity from his Puritan lectureship in Essex. To his dismay, he found himself mired in a period of anguished spiritual struggle forcing him to re-examine the possibility of experiencing assurance of grace. In *Seven Treatises* (1592, with many editions thereafter) he described the life of personal spiritual and moral discipline through rigorous daily devotional practices that soon typified the Puritan way. This intense work of spiritual exercises as means of grace emerged hand in hand with the political movement for ecclesiastical reform along presbyterian lines. The method initiated by Greenham and developed by Rogers was advanced by a growing number of clergy, including Laurence Chaderton (1536?–1640), John Knewstub (1544–1624), John Dod (1550–1645) and Arthur Hildersham (1563–1632), among others in the 1580s and 1590s.²

William Perkins, who died in 1602 at age forty-four, by the mid-1580s was recognised as the greatest theologian of the movement. Matriculating at Cambridge in 1577, he studied under Chaderton, was mentored by Greenham at nearby Dry Drayton and, receiving his M.A. degree in 1584, made his career at the University. His powerful preaching at the University was the means by which many of the next generation of Puritan clergy – including the young William Ames – were converted and guided into the ministry. A prolific writer, Perkins published *A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration, Whether a man be in the Estate of Damnation, or in the Estate of Grace* in 1588, the first of many books linking redemption through the work of Christ with a morphology of the conversion experience.

Perkins's purpose was to offer believers assurance of grace that took into account two realities: a) the mystery of divine sovereignty and the operation of the Holy Spirit in human experience and b) the human penchant to swing between self-confidence (producing hypocrisy or uncharitable zeal) and remorse for ongoing doubt and sin (tending towards despondency or loss of faith). Like the earliest writers in the Dutch 'further reformation' (*nadere reformatie*) like Jean Taffin (1529–1602), Perkins offered counsel to those who believed but could not feel Christ's love, backslid under persecution or exhibited 'small, weak marks' of faith. Indeed, Taffin's devotional classic, *Of the Marks of the Children of God* – first published in French in 1585, Dutch in 1588, and English in 1590 – reinforced the very themes Perkins addressed in the

English context in his *Treatise*. Acknowledging the difficulty of enjoying total certainty regarding one's own salvation this side of the grave, Perkins firmly established in Puritan divinity the disciplines of self-examination for evidences of sin, blessing and sanctification; meditation on the work of Christ; and perseverance in practising those exercises that were deemed to be the means of grace.³

For Perkins and other late sixteenth-century Puritans, chief among the means of grace was the Word of God preached by godly ministers of the gospel. In reaction to the Church of England's official *Books of Homilies* (1547, 1571) with sermons prescribed for reading from the pulpit, the Puritan movement called for exegetical and evangelistic sermons painstakingly prepared for each service of worship by preachers trained in biblical scholarship and delivered in plain language that would connect with the daily lives of ordinary people. Preachers employed the Ramist method of classification in designing their arguments to help listeners intellectually grasp and internalise doctrines derived from scripture. This also served as a memory device for preachers, enabling them to preach complex sixty- to ninety-minute sermons 'extemporaneously', rather than resorting to what they derided as 'dumb reading'. Puritan sermons in printed form (obviously we cannot hear them as they were actually delivered) often read like rational expositions of theology, but appeals to reason were seen in the faculty psychology of the day as a means for God to reach the heart and will. Moreover, sermons do contain passages, often towards the conclusion, that ring with poetic imagery and build to emotional crescendos. The structure of the Puritan sermon as it would be preached throughout the seventeenth century was already established by the time of William Perkins. That structure, following the reading of the biblical text, began with the 'opening' (explication) of the text, moved to an examination of doctrines suggested by the text and concluded with 'uses' or application to the lives of those in the congregation.

Perkins, combining his experience as theologian and preacher at Cambridge, at the height of his career in 1592 published the most influential manual on preaching in the Puritan movement for the next century. *The Arte of Prophesying* appeared in English in 1607, five years after his death, and was included in the widely used edition of his collected *Works* (1612–13). *The Arte of Prophesying* again struck the tension-filled theological balance between divine initiative in salvation and human responsibility and behaviour that was at the heart of Puritan practical divinity. 'The manner of perswading is on this wise: the Elect having the Spirit of God doe first discern the voice of Christ speaking in

the Scriptures. Moreover, that voice, which they doe discern, they doe approve: and that which they doe approve, they doe believe. Lastly, believing, they are (as it were) sealed with the seale of the Spirit'. The preacher, following Perkins's model, could thus speak evangelistically to a range of auditors, from the already convinced believer perhaps tempted by pride to the scoffer in whom God may stir repentance and faith that very Sabbath. The homiletic movement from text to doctrine, reasons and uses embodied the controlling idea that theology actively involves (and does not merely point to) the practice of faith. Sermons aimed to engage listeners in the biblical redemption narrative and, by the work of the Holy Spirit, empower them for obedient living.⁴

Puritan divinity arose during a period when devotional manuals abounded throughout Catholic and Protestant Europe thanks to new publishing technology. While Perkins's *Arte of Propheying* was directed to the training of clergy, professional handbooks were more than matched by the proliferation of spiritual manuals for ordinary believers. These popular texts became a means by which Puritan practical divinity was translated into regular spiritual practices by individuals, families and devotional groups. Far from inventing the genre, Puritan authors built on well-established traditions in Catholic spiritual writing, adapting classical practices and even pirating and protestantising Catholic materials. Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux were influential authors, but the perennial best-seller was the *devotio moderna* classic, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380–1471), appearing in more than sixty editions in various English translations before 1640. Numerous editions of new works rolled from the presses with titles like *A Guide to Godlynesse* and *The Christian Warfare against the Devill, World and Flesh* by John Downname; *The Plaine Mans Pathway* by Arthur Dent; *The Christians Daily Walke* by Henry Scudder; *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition on the Lords Prayer* by John Dod; *Ten Sermons Tending Chiefly to the Fitting of Men for the Worthy Receiving of the Lords Supper* by John Dod and Robert Cleaver; and *The Soules Watch: or, a Day-Booke for the Devout Soul* by German theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), to name only a few.

Most widely used of this genre was perhaps *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walke That He May Please God* by Lewis Bayly (c. 1575–1631), first published probably in 1611 (no first edition is extant; second edition 1612) and quickly going through dozens of editions. Bayly's life itself illustrates the breadth of the Puritan movement, for he had a distinguished if tumultuous career in the Church of England. In 1616 he was consecrated as bishop of Bangor, a

position he held, despite opposition (and some months in prison), until his death. The greatness of the book, published about the time its author was ordained to the ministry, lies in its comprehensive presentation of Christian theology (with opening chapters on 'The Essence and Attributes of God', 'The Misery of a Man Not Reconciled to God in Christ' and 'The State of a Christian Reconciled to God in Christ'), along with personal meditations on doctrines of the faith. As Bayly's preface asserts, 'there can be no true piety without the knowledge of God; nor any good practice without the knowledge of a man's own self'. Following a chapter analysing 'The Hindrances Which Keep Back a Sinner from the Practice of Piety', the bulk of the book offers practical guidance, including sample meditations and prayers, for devotions throughout the day, in families, in various life circumstances and in preparation for public worship. Model meditations and prayers for disciplines like fasting, for keeping the Sabbath, in preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper and for faithfulness in facing temptations, in sickness and on the deathbed – among other circumstances – provide detailed guidance for personal practice. Of particular importance for Puritan spirituality were the sections on 'Household Piety', including model prayers for morning and evening devotions and at mealtime. While Puritans typically frowned on rote repetition of printed prayers, the popularity on both sides of the Atlantic of manuals such as Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*, along with references in journals and spiritual autobiographies to their spiritual impact, testify to their influence on actual practice.⁵

Puritans shared their zeal for 'heart religion', along with an Augustinian understanding of human nature and divine grace, with other believers of their period across Western Christendom. It was this era, for example, that saw the emergence of the Roman Catholic cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the adaptation of spiritual disciplines originally developed within religious orders for the use of laity. The distinct contribution of Puritan practical divinity (along with that of their Reformed cousins on the continent), however, was its elimination of any distinction between the spirituality of clergy and laity. Puritanism offered a spirituality for life in the world, without any sense that a purer form of devotion might be found in a religious cloister. Separation from the world was to be achieved through the devotional exercises of the godly family and of the pious individual making time for reading, meditation and prayer in the midst of a productive civic and business life. Puritan divinity, thus, took with radical seriousness the doctrines of vocation and the priesthood of believers espoused by Luther and other Reformers.

Intensely personal, Puritan spirituality nevertheless resisted the tendency towards individualism, holding rather to a corporate understanding of faithful living. Anchored in Reformed theology's core doctrine of the covenant, lay leader John Winthrop gave classic utterance to Puritanism's communal nature in his discourse during the 1630 emigration of the group bound for Boston in New England. He imagined a church and colony that would become a model of 'Christian Charity', with members that know themselves 'knit together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it, if we would have comfort of our being in Christ'. Considering the colony 'as a city upon a hill', he argued that if individuals were to seek their own private good rather than 'our community as members of the same body', then God would 'withdraw his present help from us' and the colony would shamefully become 'a story and a by-word through the world'.⁶

Because of the corporate and practice-oriented nature of Puritan spirituality, ecclesiology was integral to Puritan theology. Most Puritans believed that, in one way or another, the church was at the heart of God's plan of salvation for his people. The church was not reduced in Puritan divinity to the status of a voluntary association of autonomous believers, as it would become in some Protestant groups under the influence of the Enlightenment. Nor would most Puritans accept the notion of a broadly inclusive church with unregenerate members – though they were realistic about the church's imperfections, with chaff always among the wheat. Rather, the church is the Body of Christ and therefore, as William Ames put it, both 'the subject to which and the way in which [redemption] is applied'. Puritan ecclesiology, however divergently expressed, was rooted in the doctrine of vocation, the 'effectual calling' of sinners to new life in Christ. God brings his elect into fellowship with himself solely through the saving work of Christ by the means of grace available in and through the church. Those in whom God is working salvation come into the church by virtue of their vocation – and, in turn, the church is constituted by their calling as they are united in Christ. In Puritan theology the Catholic doctrine of 'no salvation outside the church' found fresh and vigorous embodiment.⁷

The Puritan movement included believers who adhered to congregational, presbyterian and even episcopal polities, but all understood the essence of church life to be the experience of fellowship with one another in communion with Jesus Christ. The classic distinction between the invisible and visible church provided language for debates about how best to imagine – in the real world of imperfection, sin and an

established national church – the true church of God’s redeemed saints here on earth. Whether they gathered as small groups within the parish system or organised as separate congregations, Puritans agreed that the church at its best was a company of believers who could testify to their conversion to Christ and who made a covenant to worship and support one another spiritually in their life in Christ.

The public worship of God was a distinctive feature of Puritan spiritual life in two senses – first, that the saints kept the Sabbath more assiduously than did the general population; and second, that Puritan worship differed from Church of England liturgy in both style and content. Sabbatarianism, advocacy of strict religious observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, became a hallmark of those who sought further reformation of the national church in the latter decades of the sixteenth century. While rest from work was a long-accepted social norm, the notion of devoting the day to worship, family and private devotions, and other religious practices had never been required of the laity, who were entitled to spend at least portions of the day in physical recreation. Puritans were ridiculed as fanatics for embracing for themselves a rigorous spiritual regimen more typical of the monastery. They were derided even more harshly when they lobbied for such Sabbath reform as national policy. In the Book of Sports, promulgated by James I in 1617 (reissued by Charles I in 1633) and by law announced in every parish, the Church of England rejected the Puritan programme for the Sabbath by officially endorsing such activities as archery and dancing for Sunday recreation. When Puritans gained the opportunity to plan their own Sunday schedules – in private gatherings apart from parish worship, in clandestine congregations, or as members of churches in exile in the Netherlands or in the new American colonies – they typically committed themselves to six full hours of public worship, three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. The seriousness with which the saints approached the work of glorifying God on the Sabbath set them apart as a peculiar people. Indeed, it was such rigour that first earned them the snide epithet ‘Puritan’ in the early days of the movement.

Puritans also distinguished themselves by abandoning the liturgical forms officially adopted by the Church of England in favour of a plainer style that they imagined was closer to the worship of the first-century church. As one pastor put it, even though ‘the Popish Formes of Masse, Matten, and Evensong, etc.’ may have been benign in themselves, saints should ‘refuse the whole Forme’ because the dead routine of printed liturgies stifled vital spiritual worship. Another, in the 1630s, described

the Book of Common Prayer as 'this corrupt Service-booke' that has 'stunk above ground twice 40 yeeres, in the nostrils of many godly, who breathed in the pure ayre of the holy Scriptures'. Prayers in public worship were to be 'conceived' in the heart of the pastor, pre-meditated in preparation for the service and offered extemporaneously rather than merely read aloud from a printed page. Puritans highlighted the pulpit and the preached Word of God, in contrast to worship ordered by the Book of Common Prayer that retained much of the altar-centred sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic liturgy. While the Church of England continued to ordain clergy as priests dressed in traditional vestments, the surplice and the cassock, Puritan Reformers found warrant in the New Testament only for a model of ordained elders as pastors and teachers leading worship in clothing that did not distinguish them as a separate caste from the laity – whether that was the academic gown of university-trained pastors or the ordinary street clothes of preachers in more radical sects of the movement.⁸

Puritans simultaneously lengthened the duration of worship and simplified its content, filling their services with four basic practices – psalm-singing, prayer, Bible reading and sermon preaching. Other practices included lay testimony, collection of an offering and the ordinances or sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. When it came to administering Communion, most Puritans adhered to a doctrine of the real spiritual presence of Christ similar to that put forth by John Calvin, but they opted for occasional rather than weekly celebration of the sacrament. The drama played out within Puritan services of worship involved the interplay of scriptural themes and images building upon one another in sung psalter selections, spoken prayers, a biblical text read aloud and the preached Word based on that text.

Congregational psalm-singing exemplified worship in the Reformed tradition. Puritans followed the example of Calvin and Reformed churches on the continent by adopting close translations of the biblical psalms in easy-to-sing English metre, in contrast to Luther's enthusiasm for new hymns and loose paraphrases of psalms set to popular tunes. The complete metrical psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins, published with music in Geneva for the English congregation there in 1556, was included in the Book of Common Prayer in 1562 and was sometimes even published in editions of the Bible. It quickly became the version most widely used throughout the English church. Henry Ainsworth, congregationalist pastor of the English church in Amsterdam, published a metrical psalter in 1612 that was a more literal translation from the Hebrew. The Ainsworth psalter was adopted by some Puritans,

including the group living in Leyden under pastor John Robinson that would settle Plymouth Colony. But it was the Sternhold-Hopkins version that engrained itself in popular culture, sung week in and week out in public worship and family devotions. The same desire for faithfulness to the Hebrew that drove Ainsworth also motivated the clerical leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to make a fresh metrical translation in the 1630s, published as *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (Boston, 1640). This 'Bay Psalm Book' became, with the Bible, the staple of Puritan worship in New England. While the psalter was also integral to the Book of Common Prayer, it was Puritans who were known (and scorned) as zealous 'psalm-singers'. The chief means of congregational participation in worship, psalm-singing was a biblical practice that could be carried home into the routines of daily life.

The prayers of the pastor during services of worship invoked God's presence, petitioning, interceding and giving thanks for his blessings in the immediate context of the corporate gathering of saints. They also modelled – in a manner similar to prayers printed as examples in devotional manuals – how individuals might pray in their families and private exercises. In New England meeting houses, worship opened with a prayer of about fifteen minutes, and the major prayer of the morning or afternoon could last an hour or more, paralleling the sermon in length and importance. Ministers demonstrated for their flock not only stamina but passion. As one reflected in his journal on the work of the Sabbath, 'The Lord did much to in large my heart both in prayer and preaching' and 'God did graciously warme my heart in praying and preaching'. Ministers would occasionally reconstruct in their journals portions of the prayers they had offered in worship and, by arranging their prose in poetic form, it is possible to imagine their oral impact.

O! our Father, wee have sinned against thee,
but wee are sory for it,
and would do iniquity no more;
Father forgive us.
You knowest our hearts
you knowest that wee could be glad
if wee might never have so much as one sinfull thought in our
hearts,
nor speake so much as one unprofitable word more whilest wee
live.
And there is another thing which wee would beg of thee,
if ever you wilt hear the cries of poor creatures,

deny us not that request,
It is O Lord, that you wouldst sanctify us by thy spirit.

That prayer was to be 'free', or 'conceived' in the heart, made it all the more important for believers to master the formulary patterns and biblical language characteristic of Puritan spirituality.⁹

Bible reading was another worship practice that was transportable into daily life. Puritan divinity held that the acts of listening to scripture during worship and of reading the Bible for oneself during personal devotions were means through which one might expect to experience grace. William Perkins wrote in *Cases of Conscience* that for 'the profitable hearing of God's Word three things are required'. First was humble preparation by confessing and releasing all sinful 'impediments which may hinder the effectuall hearing of the Word'; second, 'a right Disposition in hearing', which included what we might call the practice of active listening, lifting up the heart in prayer, developing a 'hearing eare' and 'labor[ing] to be affected' as the words are read; and third, attention to 'Duties to be practiced afterward'. These duties would include listening to the sermon, with its application of the text to the lives of auditors, and integrating the text into one's meditations and prayers at home following worship. In a Puritan service of worship, images and phrases from the passage – and from the psalms that were sung – would echo for more than two hours through the words of the pastor as he offered prayers and preached the sermon. Puritan piety was, thus, a spirituality of God's Word. Heads and hearts were stocked with a whole Bible-full of devotional resources, along with instruction and models for meditation and prayer available in the popular manuals.¹⁰

Catechesis was also vital to the dissemination of practical divinity. The practice of training children, servants and other adults in basic theological understandings bridged the public and private aspects of Puritan devotion. While pastors preached sermons, teaching and learning belonged to the spiritual work of households. The common question-and-answer pedagogical format was adopted by the sixteenth-century Reformers, famously in Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1529) and in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) that guided Dutch Reformed spiritual life. Puritan clergy, with parish appointments or in private lectureship positions in England, took seriously their role as theological teacher for those under their care, overseeing heads of households in their responsibility for the religious training of children and servants. Formal catechisms were so important in the seventeenth century that many New England pastors wrote them for use in their

congregations, including Thomas Shepard's *The First Principles of the Oracles of God* and John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes*. For most congregationalists and presbyterians on both sides of the Atlantic, the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1648, including the Shorter Catechism, became theologically normative.

Puritan spirituality was nurtured in public worship, in smaller groups meeting for instruction and spiritual support, and in family household settings, but it depended upon individual devotional exercises that fostered personal spiritual experience. As the basis for ecclesial and civic reformation, Puritan practical divinity addressed 'the application of redemption' in Christ to individual souls. Such personal spiritual transformation was understood as an ongoing process – sanctification was seen as gradual rather than as an isolated event. Ultimately, Puritan piety was a lifelong exercise, beyond the experience of conversion, of preparation for glorification with Christ in heaven. Manuals advised believers to engage in spiritual practices especially in the evening before retiring and upon rising in the morning, a cycle that replicated the drama of death and resurrection at the heart of the Christian gospel. Journal entries suggest that saints often prepared for the Sabbath by following a pattern of self-examination through the week, a practice outlined in devotional manuals, with prayers of confession and mortification of sin on Saturday that culminated in fresh experiences of God's grace during Sabbath worship.

Puritanism's core individual spiritual exercises of reading, meditation and prayer were rooted in medieval Catholic spirituality. Spiritual writing – including journal keeping, spiritual autobiography and meditative poetry – supported and gave these practices expression. John Bunyan's testimony in his autobiography to the influence of Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, for example, typifies Puritan commitment to devotional reading and writing. Of course, Bible reading was at the heart of Puritan spiritual life, as John White explained in *The Way to the Tree of Life: Discoursed in Sundry Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Scriptures*: 'The reading of Scripture is nothing else but a kind of holy conversation with God, wherein we enquire after, and he reveals unto us himself, and his will'. Meditation in Puritan spirituality began with the believer imaginatively entering the biblical text and allowing the text to stand in judgement over one's personal life. Thus, while Puritan meditation frequently focused on exercises in self-examination to root out sin and discern signs of grace, the biblical framework tended to keep these exercises from degenerating into self-absorption. The biblical promises

made possible the resolution of misery for one's sinfulness into joy for one's salvation. As Richard Rogers wrote in 'A Direction unto True Happiness': 'The first part of diligent meditation, will humble and bring thee low in thine own sight, and raise in thee a true sorrow of heart, seeing thy deadly misery. The second part by the working of God's Spirit, shall settle thee in most cleare safety and peace, by seeing thy self delivered from the same misery.' Thirdly, Rogers explained, meditation 'will shew thee how to change thy life, and conforme it unto the will of God, and give thee direction how to walke with God daily'.¹¹

Manuals, journals and other spiritual writings describe meditation taking place in regular patterns – daily, weekly in preparation for the Sabbath, and even annually in conjunction with birthdays or days of fasting or thanksgiving – and in response to occasions such as life crises or major events. Prayer, quite naturally, flowed from meditation and followed the patterns of mortification and vivification that characterised Puritan spirituality. New Englander Anne Bradstreet expressed this heart of Puritan piety in her poem 'By Night When Others Soundly Slept'.

I sought him whom my Soul did Love,
With tears I sought him earnestly;
He bow'd his ear down from Above,
In vain I did not seek or cry.

Pastor Edward Taylor expressed the culmination of his meditation on the infinite love of God in Christ and the 'Fireless Flame' of his own faith with similar passion: 'Lord blow the Coal: Thy Love Enflame in mee.'¹²

As the movement adapted in response to changing political and social pressures over the course of the seventeenth century, the themes of Puritan spirituality and practical divinity remained remarkably constant, shaping the thinking and experience of eighteenth-century evangelicals who were in many ways their heirs.

Notes

1. William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. J.D. Eusden (Durham, NC, 1983; orig. 1968), pp. 72, 77–8, 149, 167–9, 214, 219, 236.
2. M.P. Winship, 'Weak Christians, backsliders, and carnal gospellers: assurance of salvation and the pastoral origins of Puritan practical divinity in the 1580s', *Church History*, 70 (2001), 462–72.
3. Jean Taffin, *The Marks of God's Children*, trans. P.Y. DeJong (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003).

4. T. Toulouse, *The Arte of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens, GA, 1987), pp. 14–21.
5. A modern reprint edition is available: Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (Morgan, PA, n.d., from the 1842 edition).
6. John Winthrop, 'Christian Charity, A Model Hereof', in D.D. Hall, ed., *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), pp. 168–9.
7. Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, pp. 175–81; 'The Westminster Confession of Faith', *The Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY, 2002), pp. 134, 152.
8. C.E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982), p. 43.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 104–9.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.
11. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), ed. R. Sharrock (London, 1962), pp. 8, 16–17; Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, p. 167.
12. *Early New England Meditative Poetry: Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor*, ed. C.E. Hambrick-Stowe (New York, 1988), pp. 77, 158–9.

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12 Puritan polemical divinity and doctrinal controversy

DEWEY D. WALLACE, JR

John Bunyan declared that 'it pleased me much to contend with great earnestness for the Word of faith',¹ and he and other Puritans were not slack in doing so. The theological literature of the Protestant Reformation and its seventeenth-century aftermath (including that written by English and American Puritans) was shaped by controversy. Doctrinal differences from Roman Catholicism had to be defended, boundaries drawn among Protestant factions and Christian truth defended against gainsayers. Such theological polemic was not confined to treatises written in the heat of doctrinal debate but spilled over into catechetical, systematic, exegetical, homiletic and even devotional works. Of course theological controversy was not new in the seventeenth century: Pauline and other New Testament letters reflected early Christian controversy, the creedal formulations of ancient Christianity were moulded by theological conflict and in the later middle ages theological polemic flourished in the new universities abetted by Aristotelian logic and dialectical speculation, producing the precision of scholasticism. Later, the theology of Renaissance Christian humanists such as Erasmus was polemical in its critique of such scholasticism.

The doctrinal positions taken up and defended by Puritans were for the most part not original to them, but were rather the stock in trade of what is imprecisely designated Calvinist or more properly Reformed theology. Puritan theology was an episode in the larger story of international Reformed theology, albeit with its own nuances. Reformed theology began in Swiss and Rhineland cities with Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer and John Calvin, all of whom agreed with Luther in his affirmation of justification by grace through faith, his insistence on the primacy of scripture over church tradition and his attack upon transubstantiation and the sacrificial character of the Mass. Also like Luther they made no break with the principal creeds of the ancient church, retaining belief in the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. However, Reformed theologians differed from

Luther on the nature of Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist: Luther retained a version of the real presence, while Zwingli and Oecolampadius stressed the memorial and symbolic character of what they termed the Lord's Supper. At the Marburg Colloquy of 1529 this difference became apparent, even though Bucer and Calvin upheld a spiritual presence closer to Luther than Zwingli had been. Thereafter continental Protestantism developed as the two 'confessions' of Lutheran and Reformed, the latter generally pressing for further reform in matters of liturgy and church decoration than had the Lutheran Reformation.

Besides differences over Eucharistic doctrine, there were other emphases in Reformed theology that distinguished it from Lutheran teachings. Beginning with Zwingli the Reformed tradition emphasised the sovereignty of God, and Calvin defended the gratuity of justification by emphasising predestination; after Lutherans backed away from a strict doctrine of predestination in their 1577 *Formula of Concord*, predestination seemed a distinctly Reformed emphasis. Reformed theologians also stressed sanctification as the fulfilment of predestination in the holy lives of the elect. Bucer's treatise *De Regno Christi* further presented the ideal of shaping a sanctified society and Calvin followed him in this regard. These aspects of Reformed thinking resonated for many Puritans, who were ardent in teaching predestination, inculcating and analysing the sanctified life and urging a godly society.

Through his extensive work of biblical commentary and his summary *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin became a major force in Reformed theology, but other sixteenth-century theologians, including Zwingli's Zurich successor Heinrich Bullinger, Calvin's Genevan successor Theodore Beza, the Heidelberg theologian Zacharius Ursinus and the Italian exile theologians Peter Martyr Vermigli and Girolamo Zanchi, played significant roles in shaping Reformed theology. In the seventeenth century there were many productive theologians in Geneva, Zurich, the Netherlands, and among the French Huguenots who further refined Reformed theology, sharpening its polemical edges as occasion warranted. Confessions of faith, drawn up in the various Reformed churches of Europe, provided normative summaries of Reformed beliefs and were inevitably polemical; the 1566 *Second Helvetic Confession*, the work of Bullinger at Zurich, employed the polemical shorthand of listing the relevant heretics abominated (most commonly from antiquity) for their false views after its positive statements of doctrine. Among the church fathers, whom they

subordinated to scripture, they relied heavily upon Augustine. But Reformed theologians above all sought to base their theology on the Bible.

In England Reformed theology and its attendant polemic took root and flourished. Early English Protestants were influenced by the Reformers of Zurich and Geneva; Bucer and Vermigli taught in the English universities of Cambridge and Oxford respectively during the reign of Edward VI; archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer moved to a Reformed theology of the Eucharist in his last years; and John Jewel, Elizabethan bishop of Salisbury, published a defence of the doctrine of the Church of England that was also a summary of Reformed theology. Apart from differences of tone and intensity, the theological outlook of Puritans who felt that Reformation had not been carried far enough in the English church is difficult to differentiate from the prevailing Protestant doctrine of the Church of England in the years after the Elizabethan settlement.

The Cambridge theologian William Perkins at the end of the Elizabethan age was a major influence in shaping Puritan thought and the agenda of Reformed theology for the ensuing century. In that new century, William Ames, an exile in the Netherlands who established his reputation at the University of Franeker from 1622 to 1633, and John Owen, theological adviser to Oliver Cromwell, vice-chancellor of the Interregnum Oxford University and leader of the Dissenting Independents after 1660, were Puritan theologians who influenced the wider Reformed world. Reformed theology also flourished among the New England Puritans.

Puritan thinkers, taking up an issue rooted in medieval discussion, typically considered theology primarily a practical rather than a speculative science (Ames defined theology as the doctrine of 'living to God' and faith as 'the resting of the heart on God')² and their exegetical, catechetical, homiletic and devotional writings aimed at edification. Such works constituted a tidal wave of printed matter by the end of the seventeenth century and revealed the Puritans as masters of what has often been called 'affectionate divinity'. This practical theology is rightly considered a major Puritan contribution to the Reformed tradition.

Such practical and edifying works often contained theological polemic. Some catechisms written by Puritans not only laid out the principal Reformed beliefs but also confuted alternative teachings. Puritan sermons frequently provided popular polemical divinity, warning against false doctrine; often published, sometimes in expanded form, they constitute an enormous literature. Puritan devotional literature also

sometimes had polemical elements: Benjamin Keach, for example, strayed from the call to conversion that was the theme of one of his treatises in order to denounce Arminian and Socinian heretics.³

The term 'body of divinity' described works with various titles that covered the full range of Christian doctrines and would be expected to include polemic against false doctrine. Dudley Fenner, Presbyterian antagonist of the bishops, was one of the first Puritans to produce such a systematic work, his *Sacra Theologia* of 1585. Edward Leigh, a layman of Puritan sympathies, published *A Systeme or Body of Divinity* (London, 1654) which, after explaining the basic doctrines of the faith, refuted 'Contrary Errors'. In New England, Samuel Stone left at his death a 'Whole Body of Divinity' that remained unpublished.⁴ Samuel Willard, another New Englander, for nineteen years worked his way through the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly in a series of lectures to his congregation that were posthumously published in 1727 as *A Compleat Body of Divinity*. Its title-page declared that the 914 folio pages of these lectures 'unfolded' the doctrines of Christianity, applying them to life, answering objections and settling controversies. And of course besides bodies of divinity Puritans wrote whole treatises on specific Christian doctrines, usually related to controversies. Such was the case with John Owen who, in a lifetime of theological productivity, wrote treatises on many of the major Christian doctrines, his whole output constituting a veritable 'body of divinity'.

Much Puritan theology was exegetical, consisting of biblical commentaries, many of which employed the new philology and textual knowledge of Renaissance Christian humanism; this literature too was often polemical. Andrew Willet (d. 1621), who shared the reforming ideals of moderate Puritans though not a nonconformist, produced massive commentaries, mostly on the Pentateuch, that besides exposition and consideration of text and vocabulary, had sections on doctrines and controversies related to the text under consideration. The *Commentarie Upon the First Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul, Written to the Ephesians* by the Puritan preacher Paul Baynes (1618) was an attack upon Arminianism in the year of the Synod of Dort. Later in the century, John Owen's massive commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews refuted Socinian heresy.

In their consideration of doctrine, two schemes for organising its topics especially appealed to Puritans: the order of salvation and the biblical covenants. Both schemes focused on those soteriological questions that were central disputes in the Reformation era but both also provided a framework for a full theological system beginning with

the nature of God and ending with eschatology – the last things. The pattern of the order of salvation had appeared in the theology of Bucer and Vermigli, both of whom had taught in England, and was taken up by Edwardian bishop John Ponet. An important statement of the order was that in Perkins's treatise *A Golden Chaine* (Latin 1590, English 1591), which depicted the links in the chain of redemption as election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification and glorification in heavenly beatitude. Other theologians inserted adoption between justification and sanctification and perseverance before glorification.

Perkins developed the theme of covenant alongside of the order of salvation, and the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647, drawn up by an assembly of divines dominated by Puritans, also deployed both schemes. Covenant or federal theology appealed to Puritans because it was based on a central theme of biblical narrative, accentuated both the divine initiative and human obligation, and, like the order of salvation, was easily related to piety. Among early Reformed thinkers Bullinger had emphasised the covenant: for him there was one covenant, the covenant of grace, anticipated before Christ, and fully realised after. Late in the sixteenth century the notion of a covenant of works made with Adam, the federal head of all humanity, prior to the covenant of grace, in which Christ was the federal head of redeemed humanity, appeared. This 'Federal' theology was first broached in England by the Puritans Dudley Fenner and Thomas Cartwright, and in the course of the seventeenth century became the common coin of Puritan theologians and spiritual writers.

Puritan theology, like that of other exponents of Calvinist or Reformed faith, in the later sixteenth and during the seventeenth century increasingly utilised scholastic method, a development related to polemical needs. Protestant Reformers such as Luther and Calvin followed Erasmus and other Renaissance Christian humanists in decrying the barrenness and impiety of medieval scholasticism, but they nonetheless drew on the medieval scholastic legacy, and such later Reformed theologians as Beza and Zanchi did so more extensively. Scholastic method was an important aspect of academic culture, was useful in the instruction of a new breed of Protestant clergy and enabled doctrine to be explicated with greater precision and orderliness. It provided vocabulary, sharpened distinctions, obviated confusion and enabled systematisation, all of which was useful in theological controversy.

Scholasticism was primarily a method, and method throughout the seventeenth century involved the logic of Aristotle, whose metaphysics and natural philosophy were also still influential, until gradually

supplanted by the new Cartesian philosophy. Thus Reformed theologians relied on Aristotle, though Zanchi's Aristotelianism was modified by the revisionist Renaissance interpretation of that ancient philosopher which prevailed at the University of Padua. However, besides the logic of Aristotle there was the more purely Protestant logic of Petrus Ramus, Huguenot martyr in the St Bartholomew's massacre of 1572. Ramus sought to replace Aristotle's logic with a logic that emphasised breaking wholes into their parts and defining things through their opposites, a method of clarification through classification. Ramism had special appeal to many Puritans because it was an effective pedagogical tool, organising Reformed thought into a manageable and easily memorised scheme. Fenner's *Sacra Theologia* was thoroughly Ramist in method, a method which he summarised in 1584 in his treatise on *The Artes of Logicke and Rhetorike*. Ames was another proponent of Ramist method and also opposed Aristotelianism.⁵ More typical of Puritan and Reformed theologians was Perkins, who employed both the newer method of Ramus and the older logic of Aristotle. Richard Baxter, prominent Puritan of the later seventeenth century, revealed the appeal of method, Aristotelian or Ramist, by his remark that he loved to read Aquinas and Scotus and could not endure 'confusion'; rather, he craved 'distinction and method'.⁶

Puritans, then, were theologians of the Reformed tradition, shaped in their polemics by its heritage, emphases and methods. The major controversies that occupied Puritan theologians fall into four overlapping phases: polemics directed against Roman Catholicism, controversy within the Church of England over its waning commitment to Reformed theology, internecine Puritan controversies and controversies with those who seemed intent on overthrowing fundamental articles of the faith. The first of these phases dates from the beginning of Puritanism, for the Puritans as the 'hotter sort of Protestants' played a leading role in anti-Roman Catholic polemic, and continued to do so throughout the history of the movement. The second phase arose in the late sixteenth century as certain theological points, eventually crystallising around the term 'Arminianism', became wedge issues between conformists and nonconformists in the Church of England; this phase persisted into the era after 1660 as Dissenting Puritans and Church of England conformists exchanged fire. The third phase, pitting those of Puritan provenance against each other, appeared in England during the 1640s and 1650s with Civil War and the Interregnum and in New England with the tensions of building a new society. The fourth phase was primarily a phenomenon of the second half of the seventeenth century, when such touchstones of

orthodoxy as justification by faith, the atonement and the Trinity came under fire from those sceptical of conventional orthodoxy, often deemed Socinians. That these controversies sometimes overlapped in the mind of Puritan polemicists is evident in a book by Francis Cheynell who charged that all these 'Grand-Malignants, Arminians, Papists, and Socinians' were 'of one confederacy' in their assault upon truth.⁷

Protestant controversy with Roman Catholics surveyed the range of practices and doctrines in dispute between them, but tended to focus on the authority of scripture, the Mass and the theology of grace. William Fulke and Thomas Cartwright, two Puritans so active in the Presbyterian cause during the reign of Elizabeth I that they were deprived for nonconformity from the mastership of Pembroke College, Cambridge and the Lady Margaret Professorship of Divinity at Cambridge respectively, defended the primacy of scriptural over papal authority and attacked the accuracy of the Catholic Rheims translation of the New Testament (Fulke, an energetic polemicist, published answers to twenty-one different Catholic authors). Andrew Willet, a Church of England theologian who thought Protestants should concentrate their polemics on the common papal enemy, authored *Synopsis Papismi* (1592) which covered many points in dispute with Rome, devoting considerable space to defending the doctrine of predestination as the assurance that salvation came through God's grace and was not based on human merit. Perkins wrote his commentary on the Apostle's Creed (*An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed*, published in 1595) not only to instruct Christians who knew little of their faith, but also to prove that Protestants had not departed from the chief points of ancient Christian belief. In *A Reformed Catholike* (1597) he maintained that the Reformation had restored true 'catholicism' and claimed that Roman Catholic theology minimised God's saving grace in common with the ancient heresy of Pelagianism. The Puritan militant John Bastwick continued the barrage with *Elenchus Religionis Papisticae* (1627), arguing that the religion of Rome was neither catholic nor apostolic. Calvinist Dissenters kept up the tradition with such efforts as a series of lectures delivered by a group of them which was published in 1675 as *The Morning Exercise against Popery*.

Puritan polemical theology was also deployed within the Church of England to prevent the erosion of its Calvinism. The errors Puritans feared were being insinuated into the national church were variously denounced by them as Lutheran, Arminian and even 'Papist'. The spectre of creeping Lutheranism appeared in a dispute over the meaning of Christ's descent to hell after the crucifixion. An elaboration of several

ambiguous biblical passages (Matt. 12:40; Eph. 4:9; I Peter 3:19) and a late addition to the Apostle's Creed, it provided a graphic and stirring image when coupled with the notion that the faithful of Old Testament times had been relegated to the limbo of the fathers until released by Christ in his descent. The Protestant Reformers rejected this holding pattern for believers prior to Christ, but differed as to what the descent of Christ did refer to. Reformed theologians rejected a spatial descent, some, like Bucer, considering the descent a reference to Christ's death and burial, while Calvin thought it a metaphor for the inward suffering of Christ's soul on the cross. But these Reformed demythologisations were rejected by later Lutherans, who accepted a literal descent of Christ to hell, not to free imprisoned souls, but to triumph over the powers of death, hell and Satan.

In England a dispute erupted over this in the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth I, when several Church of England conformists assaulted the Reformed interpretations promoted by Puritans and championed the Lutheran interpretation. Four relatively brief works of doctrinal instruction by Christopher Shutte, Edward Dering, George Gifford and Eusebius Pagett, all of whom were associated with nonconformity, appeared between 1577 and 1585 and taught Calvin's psychological interpretation;⁸ the radical separatist Henry Barrow, who was hanged for sedition in 1593, called the claim that Christ had literally descended into hell unbiblical and blasphemous.⁹ Conformists such as Bishop Thomas Cooper, responding in 1589 to the satiric Marprelate Tracts attacking the bishops, insisted that Christ's soul did indeed descend into hell. Bishop Thomas Bilson, another critic of Puritan nonconformity, asserted the Lutheran view in a sermon at Paul's Cross in 1597 and in two publications of 1598 and 1604, the last a volume of 678 pages. Henry Jacob, one of the architects of the non-separatist version of congregational polity, in his *A Treatise of the Sufferings and Victory of Christ, in the Work of our Redemption* (1598) defended Calvin's view that Christ had suffered in soul on the cross as integral to the theology of the atonement: for Christ to redeem the whole person, including the soul, he must have suffered hellish pains in soul as well as body. But Jacob did not apply this to the descent, and in the last phase of the controversy support gathered for the position that the descent to hell meant that Christ had experienced death and burial, the hell referred to being that which was designated by the Hebrew word 'sheol', the place of the dead. Perkins and William Whitaker, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, also held this view, and it became widely accepted among learned Reformed teachers, indicating the way in which biblical

philology had impact upon theological discussion. But like Jacob they still insisted that Christ on the cross suffered in soul the pain of abandonment by the Father.

The controversy over Christ's descent to hell represented an effort by some in the Church of England to put theological distance between themselves and their Puritan opponents with whom they had long differed on matters of ritual and polity. But it was the issue of predestination that drove the most effective wedge between these advanced conformists and the Puritans. According to the Reformed doctrine of predestination, which had taken firm root in the English church in the Elizabethan era, God, in the mystery of his inscrutable will, had chosen some persons for salvation, passing by the rest. Puritans typically thought this harmonised with the freedom of the will understood in the Augustinian sense as a voluntary necessity whereby no sinners were compelled to sin but did so freely. For Reformed theology, the doctrine of predestination guaranteed that redemption was the work of God and not earned by human merit; with its corollaries of the irresistibility of grace, an atonement limiting the benefits of Christ's death to the elect and the perseverance of the saints whereby none of the predestined could fall away from salvation, it was the ultimate bulwark in the protection of the central theme of Protestantism, justification by grace through faith, a faith that according to the Puritan theologian John Ball was 'a resting upon Christ alone for salvation'.¹⁰

By the 1590s there were stirrings of resistance to this doctrine of predestination, and early in the next century such advanced conformists as John Overall, Lancelot Andrewes and William Laud, the last of whom became archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, promoted a religion of sacrament and liturgical prayer within an architectural framework that enhanced the beauty of holiness, preferring such a religion of the altar to the word-centred plain-style preaching favoured by Puritans. For this they found support in many of the church fathers, Erasmian Christian humanism and the theology and practice of later Lutherans. Greater scope for the freedom of the will fit their sacramental emphasis. The debate over this issue came to be known as the Arminian controversy, after the example of the Dutch disputes over the view of James Arminius that predestination was based on God's foreknowledge of human choice. However, the English version of Arminianism was more sacramentalist and less latitudinarian than the Dutch.

Puritan controversialists brought their polemical best to the fray, as they tried to prevent the anti-Calvinist enemy from capturing the English church. Perkins had written against the Dutch Arminians before

his premature death in 1602, and his protégé the Cambridge theologian Samuel Ward was one of the English delegates to the Synod of Dort which in 1618 condemned the views of Arminius. Ward strenuously opposed the English Arminians after returning from Dort. Attacks by Puritans against Arminianism spiked with the case of Richard Montague, who wrote in 1624 that human free will was assisted by God's grace in salvation, and denied that predestination and perseverance were teachings of the English church. Those of Puritan views prominent in refuting Montague and other Arminians included the Puritan firebrand Henry Burton, who had charged Archbishop Laud with 'popery' and was later pilloried, and the laymen William Prynne and Francis Rous, who responded with books that amassed quotations to prove that Arminianism was an innovation in the Church of England. Rous also denounced Arminianism in parliament. Prynne had his cheek branded and his ears cropped for his ferocious attacks on the Laudians. John Preston, who succeeded Laurence Chaderton as head of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which had become a training ground for Puritan preachers, took a prominent role in countering Arminian churchmen in the 1626 York House Conference. But Calvinist predestinarianism was not yet only a Puritan speciality, as several Church of England bishops also joined the attack on Arminianism.

For Puritans and other Calvinists, much was at stake in this debate. Arminianism they considered not only a reversion to the Lutheran failure to carry Reformation theology to the inevitable conclusion that true believers could never lose their salvation, but also a betrayal of the Reformation doctrine of justification through grace alone, since it made salvation dependent on human choice. They thought it a revival of the ancient heresy of Pelagianism that had been countered by Augustine, and an opening to salvation by works. Furthermore, the doctrines of predestination, limited atonement, perseverance and the irresistibility of grace were inextricably tied to Christian piety and the assurance of salvation for the believer, as these matters unfolded in 'affectionate' expositions of the order of salvation and the covenants. So important was this to Puritans, that Henry Jacob thought the growing Arminianism of the Church of England reason for separation from it.¹¹ But most Puritans did not want to surrender the established church to the Laudian Arminians and with the defeat of the king in the Civil War and by the rule of Cromwell thought that had been prevented.

However, with the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy in 1660 and the ejection of the majority of the clergy of Puritan outlook from the Church of England, Arminianism was again ascendant. Dissenting

Puritans such as Owen, now outside the established church, continued to assault it for departing from the Reformation theology of grace, in this phase of the controversy focusing especially upon the sheer gratuity of the union of the believer's soul with Christ. Thus the Calvinism that had once been the common coin of the established church was becoming the special preserve of Puritan Dissenters, while Arminianism was increasingly the theological outlook of conformists. By the end of the seventeenth century in England it was mainly writers of Puritan provenance who explained and defended the major themes of Reformed theology, aided by their colleagues in New England.

Puritan theologians refuted Rome and struggled to preserve the Reformed character of the Church of England; but in power in England and New England, they became embroiled in theological polemic with one another, as radical and moderate Puritans struggled for control of their heritage. As early as the first decade of the seventeenth century, Puritan exiles in the Netherlands Henry Ainsworth and John Robinson (the Pilgrim pastor who never got to the New World) found it necessary to attack the anti-predestinarianism of radical Baptists spun off from the Puritan impulse. Such General Baptists, as they were called in distinction from the Calvinistic Particular Baptists (from belief in the predestination of particular persons), began to express their opinions more openly in the 1640s, as a wave of sectarian enthusiasm engulfed England. But it was John Goodwin, a London preacher hitherto counted among the brotherhood of Puritan preachers, who was most prominent as an Arminian seemingly within the Puritan movement. His *Redemption Redeemed* of 1651 denied predestination, limited atonement and perseverance. Another sectarian, Tobias Conyers, in 1657 published *The Just Mans Defence, or The Declaration of the Judgment of James Arminius*. Owen showed the Puritan shift of focus in opposing Arminianism: in 1643 his *A Display of Arminianism* denounced the Laudian effort to introduce a false theology into England, while in 1648 his *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* attacked an obscure sectarian critic of limited atonement. In New England there were echoes of this controversy: an Arminian at Windsor, Connecticut, was complained of in 1639, and Cotton Mather in 1702 thought Arminians abounded, along with other sectarian heretics, in Rhode Island.¹²

Presbyterian and Congregationalist Puritans fended off what they considered another error among sectarians in their defence of infant baptism. Baptists, who took the Puritan emphasis on an adult experience of conversion to the point of thinking that baptism should be restricted

to adult believers, were confuted by Baxter, among others. Baxter employed the idea of a covenant with God that included the infants of believers to defend infant baptism in a public dispute with the Baptist John Tombes in 1650.¹³ Owen, however, endorsed the ministry of the Baptist John Bunyan, whose Bedford meeting, however, did not always require the rebaptism of persons already baptised as infants.¹⁴ And though the Quaker emphasis on the indwelling Holy Spirit had Puritan roots, many Puritans, including in this case the Baptists too, fiercely attacked the sectarian Quakers for their putative separation of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit from scripture, as well as criticising them for their rejection of other points of Reformed doctrine.¹⁵ Owen's writings on the Holy Spirit were partly directed against Quakers.

The most disruptive Puritan internecine theological conflicts were over antinomianism. Antinomianism, meaning rejection of law, has been applied to those in England and New England who insisted that looking to the believer's good works of sanctification for evidence of grace was to compromise the gospel of free grace. Those accused of antinomianism argued that one should rely for assurance on the promise of the gospel and the recognition that believers had from eternity been justified and covered by the imputed righteousness of Christ. The mainstream of Puritan Reformed theology, on the other hand, held that, in accordance with the order of salvation, the justification of the sinner did not occur until the person was effectually called and actually believed (even if that believing faith was a gift of God to the elect); in this way the emphasis on the grace of predestination was combined with the sense that something really happened for the believer at the time of actual belief and was shown to have happened by the resultant good works of sanctification. In Massachusetts, Anne Hutchinson was found guilty of antinomianism and banished, and in England Tobias Crisp was considered heretical for his claim that unless justification preceded faith the latter became a good work earning salvation. The leading New England minister John Cotton, whom Hutchinson claimed as a source for her ideas, in his exaltation of free grace came perilously close to what was being denounced as antinomianism.

Some leaders of the English Independents such as Owen and Joseph Caryl, in their determination to give no ground to Arminianism, endorsed anti-Arminian books that asserted justification from eternity.¹⁶ However, Owen made clear his difference from an antinomianism that played down good works in his contention that 'we allow no faith to be justifying . . . which is not itself, and in its own nature, a spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works'.¹⁷

Meanwhile other Puritans, fearful that any appearance of antinomianism would give an opening to those who claimed that Calvinist theology undercut moral striving, emphasised the importance of good works in the Christian life as evidence of justification. Some of these moderate Calvinists also followed the Huguenot theologian Moïse Amyraut in his modification of the doctrine of limited atonement; Amyraut taught a hypothetical universalism of grace, according to which the death of Christ was sufficient for all even if efficient only for the elect. These moderate Calvinists also softened their discussions of predestination by speaking of the election of the redeemed without its corollary of the reprobation of the damned and rejected the supralapsarian version of predestination. Supralapsarianism, held by High Calvinists such as Perkins, Ames and Willard, maintained that, as a matter of logical priority in the divine mind, the election of the saved and the reprobation of the damned had preceded God's decrees to create humanity and permit the fall of Adam. Infralapsarian moderate Calvinists argued that predestination logically followed the decrees of Creation and the Fall, so that it could be more readily affirmed that no one was damned apart from their sins. Moderate Calvinists also gave special emphasis to the commonplace of Reformed theology that the predestined were elected to holiness, that is, that the penultimate end of God's choice of the elect was that they should be a holy and sanctified people on earth, known by their good works (the ultimate end of the elect was glorification, or transformation for entrance upon the heavenly rest).

During the Interregnum and after the Restoration of 1660 the moderate Puritan Calvinists were generally known as Presbyterians, whereas the Independents or Congregationalists were identified with High Calvinism. Eventually Baxter emerged as an important figure among these Presbyterians, while Owen stood out as a leader of the Independents. After 1660 the Presbyterians hankered after inclusion in the Church of England while the Independents were content to be Dissenters outside the established church; the Presbyterians seemed to fear the antinomianism of sectarians more than the Arminianism of the established church; for the Independents it was the opposite. These Puritan factions sought to work together after 1660, but controversy over justification, rooted in the antinomian issue, kept driving them apart. In his 1649 *Aphorisms of Justification*, Baxter, who also held an Amyraldian view of the atonement, multiplied distinctions in order to say that justifying faith included the good works of the gospel. Owen and other High Calvinists dealt harshly with Baxter's ungarded theological

language, and Baxter eventually retracted some of his incautious formulations. The moderate Calvinism he represented was promoted more circumspectly by John Howe and William Bates. Disputes over exactly what was and was not antinomianism flared up between Independents and Presbyterians from time to time, disrupting their joint Merchants' Lecture held at Pinners' Hall in 1673 and their 'happy union' for the funding of ministerial education in 1693. Owen and Baxter often tried to cooperate, but neither overcame suspicion of the other's theology. Both groups shied away from the Hyper-Calvinists who appeared shortly after 1700 and claimed that the elect were entirely passive in their regeneration and who rejected evangelism that made general offers of grace.¹⁸

The fourth phase of Puritan theological controversy revolved around what was somewhat loosely dubbed 'Socinianism', a term derived from Faustus Socinus, a sixteenth-century Italian Anti-Trinitarian. The Socinians also rejected the preexistence of Christ, original sin, the death of Christ as atonement for sin and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers, all central to Reformed orthodoxy. Socinianism became an important concern to the orthodox as aspects of it appeared among radical sectarians on the edge of the Puritan movement in the 1640s and 1650s. Throughout the Restoration era many Dissenting Puritans, especially among the Independents, charged that some Church of England theologians had moved beyond Arminianism to a graceless Socinian 'moralism' by their inclusion of good works in justification and denial of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers.

In the 1640s and 1650s John Biddle broached in print a full range of Socinian heresies in England. Thomas Firmin, layman and scion of a prominent Puritan family, who had attended John Goodwin's congregation, adopted Biddle's ideas. The New Englander Thomas Pynchon's *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption*, published in 1650, denied imputation and the substitutionary atonement. By the end of the seventeenth century some both within and without the Church of England rejected the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, often adopting instead an Arian view, named for its similarity to the ideas of the ancient heretic Arius, who had subordinated Christ to the Father. Some Anglican theologians of the second half of the seventeenth century who were orthodox Trinitarians, including Henry Hammond, George Bull, Jeremy Taylor and William Sherlock, abandoned the Reformed view of justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ,¹⁹ which to many Dissenting theologians seemed adrift of the established church into Socinianism. The theological work of Owen, from the 1650s

to his death in 1683, was a sustained attack on this heresy, whether in the form of overt Anti-Trinitarianism or departures from the Calvinist doctrine of justification. *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655) refuted John Biddle, *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1669) refuted Socinianism by focusing on the biblical basis for the Trinity, and *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ* (1677) defended Reformed views against putative Socinianism in and out of the established church. Owen also pointed out the limitations of the power of reason upon which Socinians relied for their conclusions; here Owen staked out a middle ground, as he had earlier defended the role of reason in religious questions against the Roman Catholic fideist John Canne.

But Puritans could weary of contending for the faith: Richard Alleine, author of works on the spiritual life, in 1661 advised the godly to eschew theological debate and concentrate on inculcating true piety; the New Englander Jonathan Mitchell envisioned heaven as without dissension, where Paul and Barnabas and Luther and Zwingli would be in harmony.²⁰ Baxter, though no stranger to theological polemic, sought, rather contentiously and certainly unsuccessfully, to find such harmony on earth by publishing in 1675 his *Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable: for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours*. However, it should not be overlooked that flowing underneath the torrent of mind-numbing Puritan polemical divinity, there remained an earnest commitment of the mind to the task of understanding divine things, the beating heart of a warm-hearted piety, and a desire to serve their God in their own time and place.

Notes

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2. *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. J. D. Eusden (Durham, NC, 1968), pp. 77, 80.
3. Benjamin Keach, *A Trumpet Blown in Zion* (London, 1694), p. 6.
4. E. B. Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven, 2003), p. 26.
5. K. L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana, IL, 1972), pp. 79, 82–3, 124–5, 141.
6. *Reliquiae Baxterianae: or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), p. 6.
7. Francis Cheynell, *The Rise, Growthe, and Danger of Socinianisme* (London, 1643), 'Epistle dedicatory'.

8. Christopher Shutte, *A Compendious Forme and Summe of Christian Doctrine* (London, 1583; first printing with different title in 1577), sig. C6r-v; Edward Dering, *A Short Catechism for Householdiers* (London, 1582), sigs. B3v-B4r; George Gifford, *A Catechisme conteining the Summe of Christian Religion* (London, 1583), sigs. B4v-B8r; Eusebii Pagetti *Catechismus Latine* (London, 1585).
9. L. H. Carlson, ed., *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1590-91*, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts, 5 (London, 1966), p. 99.
10. John Ball, *A Short Treatise Contayning all the Principall Grounds of Christian Religion* (London, 1635), p. 99.
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13. P. Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 61-4.
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15. T. L. Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War: The Baptist-Quaker Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1997).
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17. *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh, 1850-3), v. 73.
18. P. Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London, 1967).
19. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, pp. 127-8.
20. Richard Alleine, *A Letter to a Friend* (London, 1661), sig. A3; Jonathan Mitchell, *A Discourse of the Glory to Which God hath called Believers by Jesus Christ* (Boston, MA, 1721), p. 16.

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13 Puritans and the Church of England: historiography and ecclesiology

PAUL C. H. LIM

Patrick Collinson, in *The Religion of Protestants*, discusses the divergent streams within English Protestantism, emphasising the role of episcopacy in the nation's politics of religion since the Reformation was brought to the English by Henry VIII's royal injunction:

They almost oblige us declare our preferences for one of two alternative episcopal strategies and, among historians . . . we must line up either with Richard Baxter, who wrote of the Elizabethan Archbishop Grindal, the soul of protestant moderation: 'Such bishops would have prevented our contentions and wars'; or with Clarendon, for whom the . . . death of . . . Archbishop Bancroft in 1610 was one of the earliest events to which it was profitable to refer in accounting for the Great Rebellion – 'with whom died', wrote Heylyn of Bancroft, 'the *Uniformity* of the Church of England'.¹

What is fascinating is that both Baxter and Heylyn are cited as representatives of two opposing historiographical trends concerning seventeenth-century England, both then and even now.² The common question facing Heylyn and Baxter was: who stood for the true Church of England? Inherent in this question were conflicting versions of ecclesiological definition, setting at odds former co-religionists who shared episcopal ordinations, zeal against separatism and radicalism, and the vision of a godly nation at prayer.

Peter Heylyn was heralded as the authoritative chronicler of the Laudian tradition within the Church of England, whereas Baxter's perspectives on Puritanism and the history of Dissent influenced not only Edmund Calamy and his contemporaries but also several generations of 'denominational historians'.³ Where did these troubles begin in England (or from outside)? Why were their differences deemed problematic, if not irreconcilable, thus prompting conflicts, ecclesiologically and politically, precipitating the British Civil War, if revisionist

historians of early modern Britain are right? What did the Puritans hope to have instead of the existing liturgical and theological structures? These are some pivotal questions to guide the rest of this chapter.

STRUGGLE OVER THE TRUE HISTORY OF PROTESTANTISM IN ENGLAND

Two key members of the Westminster Assembly – Matthew Newcomen and Cornelius Burges – were cognisant of Richard Baxter's strategic significance as a chronicler of Puritanism. Burges, a former Assessor of the Assembly, wrote to Baxter in 1659 reminding him that the Westminster Assembly was not against all forms of episcopacy, fully knowing that Baxter's historical assessment of the 'Root and Branch' petition and the outbreak of the British Civil War would be of paramount importance.⁴ Matthew Newcomen wrote on 21 May 1661 urging Baxter to record 'the true history of the Nonconformists from the Teachers of Frankfurt to this day', for he was acutely aware of the reversal of historical judgement: 'we are not only like to suffer but to suffer as evil doers'.⁵ In the crucible of telling the 'right' story of the politics of religion since the English Reformation, Baxter emerged 'as the pre-eminent champion not only of the nonconformists, but of the Puritan tradition' as well.⁶

One of the results of this historiographical preoccupation since Baxter and his Bartolomeans were ejected from their parishes in 1662 was *Cain and Abel Malignity* (1689) – two years before his death, and on the year of the Glorious Revolution and passing of the Toleration Bill – which effectively ratified the permanent fissure between 'Church and chapel', between 'establishmentarians and the dissenters'. As the title indicates, his main thrust is to juxtapose the seed of Cain and the seed of Abel as a way of comparing the persecutory practice of the 'second-generation Laudians', who were of the Cain pedigree, with the martyrological accounts of 'conformists' and 'nonconformists', whose number was decisively small vis-à-vis that of conformists. In other words, Baxter's polemical purpose was to argue that it was the 'Laudian extremism' which drove the 'sober and sound' part of the Church of England, the 'conformable Puritans'. What is interesting is that Baxter does mention Frankfurt as the beginning of the troubles in England, just as Newcomen had suggested in 1661: 'The History of Malignity . . . must contain the sad differences begun at *Frankford* in Q. Marys days; the errors and extreams of both the differing Parties . . . the Presbyterians provocations by over-opposing Episcopacy'.⁷

He had spent much of the 1680s inveighing against the breach of the ideal vision of the Church of England by the Laudians, his predecessors and successors. *Church-History of the Government of Bishops and Their Councils Abbreviated* (1680) reached the second edition by the next year. Another treatise was published in the same year and bears out clearly the putative fact that Baxter, much like many of his contemporary Puritan clergy and laity, was preoccupied with the relationship between episcopacy and primitive Christianity. The title was *A Treatise of Episcopacy . . . Meditated in the Year 1640, when the et cætera Oath was Imposed* (1680). In this Baxter relied heavily on witness of the church fathers to argue that episcopacy as practised in the Restoration Church of England was a radical departure from primitive and biblical episcopacy. In 1682, his attack on the office of bishops and episcopal polity continued unabated; in his *True History of Councils enlarged and defended against the Deceits of a Pretended Vindicator of the Primitive Church, but indeed of the Tyranny of some Prelates many Hundred Years after Christ* (1682) Baxter reiterated the same grand narrative: the defection of the 'prelates' of the Laudian type, not the Puritans themselves.

Irrespective of whether Baxter's perspective in the early 1680s was tainted by the putative 'popish plot' of James II, it would seem that Baxter's pastoral experience in Kidderminster and writings both before and after the Restoration bear out the theme of ensuring that his parishioners were genuinely Christians. In order to maximise the potential of creating a true 'holy commonwealth', Baxter and his like-minded Puritan clergy saw the indispensable necessity of a community of genuine believers. Christianisation, in other words, was the ultimate agenda of the quintessential 'Reformed' pastor of mid-seventeenth-century English Puritanism.

Let us seek to better understand the ecclesiological tension and the nature of relationship between those whom both Heylyn and Baxter mutually reviled, for in doing so we could arrive at a more complex and nuanced picture of English Protestantism in the early modern period, and the role of Puritanism within it. According to Heylyn, the Puritans were the Arians *redivivus*, descendants of the arch-heretic of the fourth century during the time of the Council of Nicaea. The term Arian was one of the worst epithets to hurl at one's opponent, and it also meant that the group suspected as Arians would not be regarded as Christians. Heylyn's treatise *Aerius Redivivus: Or, the History of the Presbyterians* (1670) basically argued that the fractious firebrands called Presbyterians, an exchangeable term with Puritans, betrayed the sobriety and

sovereignty of the Church of England. Whereas Heylyn bracketed together Presbyterians and Puritans, attributing to them seditious aspirations certainly including the regicide of Charles I, Baxter would assiduously claim – both before *and* after the Restoration – that such elision of two disparate categories of English religiosity was merely a convenient caricature.⁸

As has been alluded to in the foregoing section, Baxter's historiographical strategy was to argue that the divergence between the Laudians and the conformable Puritans, who would have been satisfied with a 'primitive episcopacy', was almost entirely due to the Laudians' inordinate requirement for subscription with regard to liturgy, be they wearing the surplice, kneeling to receive the Eucharist, *et cetera*. The point of the infamous 'et cetera' oath of 1640 was that the Laudians pushed the liturgical envelope simply too far for the 'middle-majority' conformable folks to take side with the more centrifugal, radical Puritans at the dawn of the Civil War. While it might be possible to argue that Baxter's attitude towards the Laudians hardened as a result of the Anglican intransigence during the first two decades after the massive ejection of Puritan ministers, it is crucial to note that during the Interregnum the pens of Baxter and Heylyn had already crossed, thus sparking a heated debate on the nature of true ordination, and on the identity of true church as well.

In April 1655 'Theophilus Church', which was Heylyn's pseudonym, wrote to Baxter denying the ecclesial validity of the non-Laudian Interregnum church. He raised the question of conscience – entirely typical of much Protestant and Catholic casuistry – regarding participating in the false church: whether a Christian may order his 'conscience . . . as long as that part of the Catholick Church wherein he lives, is under persecution and the visible Ruling Church there is fallen Schismatical, if not in many particulars Heretical'?⁹ Heylyn had worked closely with Henry Hammond, Thomas Pierce, John Cosin and other surviving members of the Laudian church to subvert the progress of Reformation – as espoused by the Puritans. Baxter and Heylyn exchanged several letters and they were later published by Heylyn as *Certamen Epistolare* in 1659. Henry Hammond lived near Kidderminster where Baxter was indefatigably inching towards reforming his parish, and Sir Ralph Clare, the 'thorn in the flesh' for Baxter's pastorate, often served as a go-between for Heylyn and Hammond in their interactions with Baxter. Thus, one can see that the roots of Baxter's anti-Laudian sensibilities did not spring up only after the Restoration in 1660.

If the foregoing partly explains the tension between the 'right-wing Laudians' and the conformable Puritans, then what of the other wing of English Protestantism, the radical separatists? How did the 'middle-majority' Puritans and the radicals in fact differ? What prompted some of the more radical fringes of Puritanism to splinter into either creating a subterranean network of intense religiosity while feigning allegiance to the prescribed forms of liturgical praxis, or abjuring allegiance to the existing ecclesial framework by forming separated congregations? Though there were increasing numbers of radical Puritans and separatists, the majority of Puritans in England were bunched up in the middle, nonetheless acutely aware of the points of tension between the 'godly and the multitude', as Eamon Duffy has reminded us.¹⁰

Therefore, it seems increasingly clear that the complaint of the 'middle-majority' Puritans – if we could grant that Baxter might be a well-suited spokesman – was that the Laudians' ecclesiology, theology and liturgical praxis were inadequate to accomplish the ongoing Reformation of the English church. In other words, the Puritan jeremiad was focused on the identity of the Laudian church as a failed institution for proselytisation.¹¹ Here is an interesting convergence between the seventeenth-century English Puritan complaint concerning what was missing in the English Church, its inattention to the task of Christianisation, and the recent trend in the historiography of continental Reformation to identify the common – and oft-competing – task and vision of Christianisation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

REFORMATION IN EUROPE: PUTTING ENGLAND IN A BROADER CONTEXT

As is the case with much of contemporary historiography, specialisation and sub-specialisation has become the norm of the guild so that connecting the themes and sources of two disparate nations or cultures seems too naïve – thus lacking sophistication – or too generalised – thus insufficiently contextualised. For example, although there was quite a bit of border-crossing refuge-seeking between England and various Protestant communities on the continent, many histories of the Reformation in England and on the continent do not connect the dots, which were natural to the Protestant co-religionists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Scott Hendrix's *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* convincingly argues that the common

vision and agenda of the Reformers – be they Luther, Calvin, the Anabaptists or the Tridentine Fathers – was Christianisation, the process by which their realms became more intensely religious. For Hendrix confessionalisation and Christianisation are inextricably linked together, for the one presupposes the other and they are mutually reinforcing. Thus he asserts: ‘I believe it is more accurate and conceptually useful . . . to speak of one Reformation and to locate its diversity in the various theological and practical agendas that sought to realize the goal of Christianisation. These agendas led to a variety of political and social outcomes that historians now call confessionalisation.’¹²

It seems that the ‘religious currents and cross-currents’ of the Protestant Reformation, part of the stream of which was the rivulet of reform called Puritanism, need to be considered together as one thinks about the issues of ecclesiology, the doctrine and praxis of the church, as it was inevitably tied to the issue of intensification of Christian identity, whether one was German, or Swiss, or English.¹³ Hendrix’s main thesis is that the common vision of creating a ‘more intensely and intentionally Christian’ region and nation-state transcended denominational and confessional barriers. The three major rubrics to consider under the theme of Puritanism as a ‘full-court press’ for Christianising England are: ‘catechising and conversion’, ‘discipline’ and ‘the Eucharist’.

CATECHISING AND CONVERSION AS KEYS TO CHRISTIANISATION

As has been argued elsewhere in this volume, the religious intensity of the Puritans took shape bi-directionally, either staying in the fold of the Church of England and seeking reform from within (thus the centripetal tendencies of mainstream Protestantism), or creating a ‘purer’ communion by re-drawing the boundary between the ‘true’ and ‘false’ churches (the centrifugal tendencies of the ‘sect’ type of Protestantism, à la Troeltsch).¹⁴ While it is undoubtedly true that the Puritans – of both old and New England – were deeply concerned with the creation of a purer communion of saints, thus often incurring the wrath of the establishmentarian Anglicans as ‘Donatists’, it would be a mistake to assume that ecclesiology was their primary concern. As Martin Bucer in his *De Regno Christi* made clear, the true reign of Christ presupposed the existence of true followers of Christ. Soteriology – the doctrine of salvation – of which conversion was a key component was the driving engine behind the creation of pure community.¹⁵

Martin Luther's visitation of Saxony in 1527–8 revealed some deep structural problems in the newfound religious landscape of Lutheran Germany: dearth of Christian instruction. Thus Luther lamented the situation in his preface to 'The Small Catechism':

The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism . . . Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptised, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.¹⁶

Consequently, what Luther exhorted his fellow pastors to embark on was the 'serious and salutary' task with little 'reward or gratitude'. However, nothing less would suffice since the office of ministry 'has now become a completely different one than . . . under the pope'.¹⁷ What Luther envisioned was a more intentional process of helping one to 'remember one's baptism' by a rigorous system of catechising in order to answer the critique of the Anabaptists, whose complaint about infant baptism had as much to do with the fact that many of the adolescents-cum-adults who were baptised into the heavenly kingdom of Christ as infants were living more like inhabitants of Dante's *Inferno* than like Bunyan's faithful pilgrim in *Pilgrim's Progress*. As will be shown below, the situation in England bore an uncanny resemblance to this, in the putative inadequacy of the existing church structure to ensure the fostering of true *communio sanctorum*, which was a living reality for those who inexorably pursued the continual reform of the church outside the bounds of the existing national church.

William Whately – though not well known among contemporary historians of early modern England – was regarded as a formidable preacher. He was vicar of Banbury near Oxford, which was known as a Puritan enclave by the late 1620s.¹⁸ Having been presented in 1607 to the ecclesiastical authorities for administering the Eucharist to those refusing to kneel, inveighing against what he regarded as additional *adiaphorous* ceremonies now required as part of divine worship, and omitting prayers for the bishops, Whately was part of the Cambridge-educated clergy, having sat under the teaching of Laurence Chaderton

and William Perkins.¹⁹ He published a number of his sermons in a treatise called *The New Birth: or, a Treatise of Regeneration* (London, 1618).²⁰ It proved to be an immensely popular treatise on conversion, reaching its sixth edition by 1635. Here we note the politics of conversion under the Anglo-Catholic arch-episcopate of William Laud; Whately's parish was so zealous and intensely pious that it is personified in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* by Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. It is interesting, then, that Whately would preach a series of sermons on conversion when the entire parish was presumably baptised and confirmed.

While eschewing separatism, Whately espoused an internal separation which, as Patrick Collinson has reminded us, could actually intensify communal antagonism, adding further fuel to the fire of binary opposition between the 'godly and ungodly'.²¹ Thus Whately urges his parish to take the 'heart work' of conversion most seriously, comparing the task of conversion and vigilant peregrination thereafter to a battle: 'Where is thy godly conversation, thy departing from all wickedness, and exercising thy self constantly in that that is good? What combats hast thou made with sin and Satan, and with the unsanctified World?'²² The crucial question was: 'What does one do when the "unsanctified world" exists right within one's own parish?'

Undoubtedly a revised version of his sermons, Whately's *New Birth* has a catechetical structure to it, almost reminiscent of the Ramist logic of dualism and dichotomisation of all subjects and headings.²³ In addition to Whately's reworked sermons-cum-treatise-on-conversion, there was a panoply of catechisms and confessions, commentaries on the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith and translations of catechisms written by continental Reformers. Ian Green's *The Christian's ABC* portrays the proliferation and wide dissemination of catechisms and confessions.²⁴

Lancelot Andrewes, regarded by many as the precursor of the avant-garde of high Anglicanism, confessed the singular achievement of catechisms: 'By our catechising the papists have lost ground of us, and can never recover it again unless by a more exact course of catechising than ours.'²⁵ George Herbert expressed a similar sentiment, identifying catechising as one of the three key factors in reforming the church:

The country parson values catechising highly; for there are three points of his duty, the one, to infuse a competent knowledge of salvation in every one of his flock, the other to multiply and build up this knowledge to a spiritual temple; the third to inflame this

knowledge, to press and direct it to practice, turning to reformation of life by pithy and lively exhortations.²⁶

Known collectively as effective preachers, some Puritans were nonetheless keenly aware of John Rogers's angst when he admitted that his parishioners were much 'like the Smiths dog, who can be under the hammers noyse, and the sparks flying, and yet fast asleep'.²⁷ A supplement to lectures by combination – a vital ingredient in the Puritan staple spiritual diet – and 'sermon-gadding' was needed; a more directly interventionist approach was demanded by an increasing number of people. Often regarded as an arch-enemy of Roman Catholics among Elizabethan Puritans, William Perkins surprisingly identified auricular confession as a key missing link in the ecclesiastical structure of the Church of England: 'for however we condemn Auricular confession . . . yet we not only allow, but call and cry for that confession, whereby a Christian voluntarily at all times may refer to his Pastor, and open his estate . . . and crave his godly assistance'.²⁸

However, one Puritan pastor whose pastoral insights led him to combine the salutary aspects of 'Auricular confession' and catechising was Richard Baxter. It was this effort of catechising his entire parish in Kidderminster, both young *and* old, and extending the scope of this bold effort in 'ecclesiological reconfiguration' throughout Worcestershire that underscored Baxter's commitment to the Christianisation of England. As early as 1650, he was convinced that preaching alone was not going to accomplish the desperately needed work of reformation, thus signalling the need for catechising: 'the bare invitation of the Gospel . . . is so far from being an evidence of Christianity . . . that where it prevails not to a thorough-Conversion, it sinks deeper and casts the soul under'.²⁹ In *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, he spoke of catechising as the work that 'yielded . . . most Comfort', and reflected on how he and the ministers in the Worcestershire Association – a presbyterial structure designed to foster ecclesiastical order during the Interregnum – came to the task of catechising:

And about the same time [c. 1653–4], Experience in my Pastoral Charge convinced me that publick Preaching is not all the ordinary Work of a faithful Minister, and that personal Conference with every one about the State of their own Souls, together with Catechizing, is a Work of very great Necessity: For the Custom in *England* is only to catechize the younger sort, and that but by teaching them the Words Catechism in the Liturgy, which we

thought . . . had little more explicatory than the Words themselves of the Creed, Lords Prayer, and Decalogue: Therefore I propounded the Business to the Ministers, and they all . . . consented that I should turn our brief Confession into a Catechism.³⁰

Both *Christian Concord* (1653) and *An Agreement of Diverse Ministers . . . in Worcester . . . for Catechizing* (1655) clearly evince Baxter and his colleagues of Worcestershire's commitment to the work of 'thorough-Conversion' via catechising and personal instruction, eventually leading to an intimate knowledge of the soul's state, thus enabling the Puritan ministers to accomplish the work of Christianisation of England. In 1656, Baxter wrote twice – once in *The Reformed Pastor*, and the other time in a letter to Thomas Wadsworth, a pastor from Surrey – that 'we never took the best course for demolishing the kingdom of darkness, till now'.³¹ Baxter's treatises such as *Now or Never* and *A Call to the Unconverted* all underscore a religious culture which was seeking to ensure that his parishioners move beyond a calendrical piety to that of zealous praxis of 'sermon-gadding' and 'private prayer'. Eamon Duffy encapsulates the reformational priority of the Puritans regarding conversion: 'Conversion, therefore, meant not merely bringing the heathen to knowledge of the gospel, but bringing the tepid to the boil by awakening preaching, creating a godly people out of a nation of conformists.'³²

DISCIPLINE AND CHRISTIANISATION

One of the earliest points of divergence between the 'magisterial Reformers' – such as Luther and Zwingli – and the Anabaptists was on the virtual absence of the mechanism of effecting pastoral discipline. *The Schleithem Articles* (1527), regarded as an early expression of the Anabaptist movement, set forth their distinctive position vis-à-vis the magisterial Reformers. On the issue of 'ban', or discipline, it states: 'The ban should be used against all who have given themselves to the Lord . . . (yet) slip and fall into error or sin', but the ultimate purpose was for restoration of the offender and strengthening of the fellowship.³³

Patrick Collinson observed that '[n]o blemish of the Elizabethan Church was more prominent or more wounding to the Puritan conscience than the general absence of discipline'.³⁴ In *An Admonition to the Parliament*, John Field included discipline as a third mark of a true church: 'The outwardes markes whereby a true christian church is knowne, are preaching of the worde purely, ministring of the sacraments sincerely, and ecclesiastical discipline.' The writers of the *Admonition*

asserted that discipline was the direct path to Christianising all of 'this Realme' and identified this as a common goal for *all* Protestants: 'Is a reformation good for France? and can it be evyl for England? Is discipline meete for Scotland? and is it unprofitable for this Realme? Surely God hath set these examples before your eyes to encourage you to go forward to a thorow and speedy reformation.'³⁵ John Field – and Thomas Wilcox – appended a letter from Theodore Beza of Geneva written in July 1566 to Edmund Grindal, then bishop of London. Beza exhorted Grindal that 'the simplicitie of the ceremonies of this church . . . and the whole order of our Discipline, are drawne out of the same fountaine', namely the Word of God.³⁶

Similarly, the 'Root and Branch Petition' (1640) lays out with unmistakable clarity that the 'general abuse of that great ordinance of excommunication', deemed as the last resort to pastoral discipline, had vitiated the fabric of the church to an extent that for some of the godly, separatism was the only viable option.³⁷ The question of discipline was closely tied to the perceived inadequacy of sacramental administration, especially that of paedobaptism; the 'Anabaptists' of England began to demonise its validity and separate from the parochial churches. The London bookseller George Thomason collected over 125 tracts, pamphlets and broadsides covering this issue of baptism and discipline.³⁸ Combined with the proliferation of these printed debates, there were at least 79 public disputes devoted to the interrelated themes of discipline and baptism.

Peter Heylyn was aware that the word – and the reality represented by – 'discipline' was not a pejorative term. In his *Aerius Redivivus*, he indicted Calvin of ecclesiastical innovation: 'Which Form of Discipline it was, I have nowhere found; but sure I am, that it had no affinity with the Primitive Church.' Moreover, Heylyn had excoriated the Genevan church – thus all Puritans who had identified with the Calvinist tradition – for forsaking the order and beauty of ancient ecclesial discipline.³⁹

Richard Baxter was all too painfully aware of the legitimacy of the separatist complaint about the virtual collapse of discipline during the Civil War and Interregnum England. Though there were programmes such as the Triers and Ejectors implemented under the Cromwellian regime, they were deemed to be piecemeal and mostly ineffective. He ruefully reflected:

It is because we will not make that meet and necessary separation, which Christ requireth regularly and authoritatively as Guides of

the Church, that so many do make irregular sinfull separations. The great fault is in us, and we do but condemn our selves in crying against Separatists, as long as we continue the occasion by our neglect.⁴⁰

Above all, for Baxter and his colleagues in the Worcestershire Association, the Triers and Ejectors system was only punitive without the positive reinforcement of labouring towards the Reformation ideal of Christianisation.⁴¹ The missing positive element was the incorporation of the formerly non-covenanted parishioners of their parish so that they would be accountable to their parish incumbent in matters of discipline.

Thus Baxter reflected:

I dare not be an Instrument of hindering Reformation, and the Execution of just Discipline, by gratifying the Unruly that fly from it, and set themselves against it . . . Besides, the Office of a Pastor is not only to Preach and Administer the Sacrament, but also to admonish, rebuke and exercise some Discipline for the Good of the Church . . . I will be a Pastor to none that will not be under Discipline: That were to be a half Pastor, and indulge Men in an unruliness and contempt of the Ordinance of Christ.⁴²

A number of parishioners under the Puritan ministers seeking to implement discipline balked at such an attempt at 'moral control'. However, there were some enthusiastic laity who found such overtures a truly long-awaited biblical measure. One of the unintended aftermaths of such dichotomisation of the parish was the forming of a 'semi-separatist cell, an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*'.⁴³

One of the key concerns for discipline had to do with the right and rightly prepared receiving of the Eucharist, to which we shall turn as we seek to investigate the Puritan preoccupation with Eucharistic piety and purity and the concomitant connection with the task of Christianisation.

A HOLY FAST AND AN UNHOLY FEAST: THE EUCHARIST AND CHRISTIANISATION IN PURITAN PRAXIS

The Eucharist – its nature and significance in the liturgy of the Christian church – was one of the hotly debated issues during the Reformation, dividing not only Catholics and Protestants, but also Lutherans and Reformed, Anabaptists and Zwinglians.

In contradistinction to the intra-Protestant debates on the continent, the main Puritan critique of the Laudian praxis of the Eucharist was that it was offered to unworthy recipients in that, because of the failure of discipline, the 'holy table' had become too profane. Profanation of the table notwithstanding, another major concern for the Puritans was that misuse of this 'ordinance of the Lord' would slow the work of a 'thorow reformation' in England, for the Eucharist was a 'faith confirming' and 'faith augmenting' sacrament *par excellence*.

Nevertheless, there is an ironic twist to the Puritan preoccupation with preservation of the purity of this sacrament. Arnold Hunt has pointed out that the Puritans' efforts to stop the Laudian unholy feast inadvertently resulted in a holy fast. Both John Bossy and Eamon Duffy have written of the community-building aspect of the Eucharist in late medieval English religion.⁴⁴ For Bossy, the Eucharist was the 'skeleton of the social body' and fed the community's social well-being. It was, moreover, a time of reconciliation. Although the picture may not have been as rosy in all parishes, Bossy and Duffy's general thrust needs to be taken seriously. According to Christopher Haigh, 'sin, malice, and ignorance' were the three leading reasons for exclusion from the Eucharist, and rather than bringing about penitence and restoration to the Table for the next Communion, 'produced new troubles and fractured communities'.⁴⁵ Reception of the Eucharist at Easter, according to Duffy, was known as 'taking one's rights, a revealing phrase, indicating that to take communion was to claim one's place in the community'.⁴⁶ Thus, over against the parishioners' claim to take their 'rights', how did the administration of the Eucharist serve as a tool for a further reformation and Christianisation, as numerous Puritans avowed?

A typical Puritan jeremiad deplored the gulf between the scriptural ideal and the contradictory reality when it came to the Eucharist. *An Admonition to the Parliament* of 1572, for example, contrasted the exemplary Eucharistic practice of the first-century Christians with the Elizabethan counterpart: 'They toke it with conscience. We with custume', it complained. Whilst 'they shut men by reason of the sinnes, from the Lords Supper', continued the *Admonition*, 'we thrust them in their sinne to the Lords Supper'. These Elizabethan Puritans desired to reform the situation by petitioning parliament to enjoin the 'Elders and other officers' to examine the communicants since they 'wyl not examine themselves' as was the custom of the early church, and since it was the only way to recover the true vision of the church and for the Christian.⁴⁷

During the archbishopric of William Laud, the Communion Table became an 'altar', reminiscent to many Puritans of popish inversion

of the Lord's Supper, and the liturgy became more Eucharistically orientated rather than preaching being the culmination of sacred worship.⁴⁸ For many Laudians 'preaching was but a means to bring people to prayer', since communion with God 'begins indeed in Baptisme but ends in the Lords Supper'.⁴⁹ The new emphasis on sacramental grace in the Lord's Supper, combined with a relative devaluation of preaching, alarmed the Puritans. Archbishop Laud's Eucharistic centrality is encapsulated here: 'in all ages of the Church the touchstone of religion was not to hear the word preached but to communicate'.⁵⁰

While it is true that the struggle for 'rival views of the Christian religion, the one built around the sacraments and the other focused on the sermon' marked the controversies of the Laudian era, it is also true that the Puritans continuously sought reform of the Lord's Supper during the Interregnum as well.⁵¹ Indeed, William Lamont judiciously remarked that 'the debate over admission to the Lord's Supper in the Commonwealth period determined the characteristic and fortunes of Puritanism for the rest of the century'.⁵²

It would seem that the communal fracturing about which Christopher Haigh has written persisted in Baxter's Worcestershire as well. One key agenda item in the meetings of the associating ministers in Worcestershire was to enquire as to 'whether they [e.g., parishioners] are fit to be admitted or not'. Baxter reiterated the same clarion call as he preached before parliament in December 1654, naming the pastors who were eschewing the hard work of covenanting each member of their parishes to come under their pastoral charge, inclusive of discipline.⁵³ For the Puritans – as represented in Baxter's Eucharistic theology – true communion of saints and discipline were inextricably woven together into the fabric of a nation truly Reformed. Baxter asserted that the communion of saints could be enjoyed in a relatively pure sacramental fellowship. In the mindset of the Puritans, the elusive reality of 'pure' and 'purity' inevitably prompted further expressions of 'centrifugal' tendencies of Protestantism: how pure should the communion be until it is deemed incorrigibly impure, thus necessitating separation from that impure church community? Baxter responded to the all-too-common complaint of a hypothetical polemicist who wondered if any comfort could be derived from 'a Mixt Communion' by inverting the rhetoric of discipline and purity against the separatist. So he wrote:

If they do not their duty in . . . labouring to heal the diseased member, and to reform the Church in Christs appointed way, *Matt.* 18.17 . . . But if they faithfully do their own part, how should the

sins of others be their burden, unless by way of common compassion? And how have Gods servants in all ages of the Church to this day received comfort in such mixt Communion?⁵⁴

In the rigorous pursuit of Christianising England, a number of non-separating Puritans caught themselves between the Scylla of pre-Restoration Laudianism and post-Restoration high-Anglicanism on the right, and the Charybdis of radical separatism on the left. Three rival visions of the true church generated conflicting histories as we see in Peter Heylyn and Richard Baxter. Collinson's highlighting the tendency of historians to line up with either Heylyn or Baxter further illustrates that the inescapable historiographical tension that existed since the 'trouble at Frankford' began continues to cast its long shadow today.

Notes

1. P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), p. 43. The sources cited are: Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus; the First Part, i.e., The Reformed Pastor* (1656), 'Preface'; Clarendon, *History of the Great Rebellion*, ed. W.D. Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1888), I. 118; Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus Anglicus* (London, 1668), p. 62.
2. For Baxter's role as a chronicler of Puritanism, see P. Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 191–223.
3. For a well-contextualised study of Peter Heylyn, see A. Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: The Career and Writings of Peter Heylyn* (Manchester, 2007).
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5. Matthew Newcomen to Richard Baxter, *Baxter Correspondence*, vol. V, fol. 179.
6. N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), p. 18.
7. Richard Baxter, *Cain and Abel Malignity* (London, 1689), sigs. A5^{r–v}.
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12. S. Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (London, 2004), p. 8.
13. There is a major lacuna of research and historiography that connects the continental and English dimensions of the Reform movements and impulses. Several exceptions are: A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 1995); W.J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden, 2007). A major conference on 'The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain and Ireland' that was *finally* held in September 2007 helps prove the point. See <http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2007/reformation/prog.html>.
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15. See S. Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570–1625* (Oxford, 1988); J.W. Black, 'From Martin Bucer to Richard Baxter: "Discipline" and Reformation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England', *Church History*, 70 (2001), 644–73.
16. Martin Luther, 'Preface to the Small Catechism', in T.F. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis, 2005), p. 318.
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18. For Whately (1583–1639), see *DNB*; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 27–8, 159–60, 161, 192, 252, 261.
19. On Chaderton, see P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982).
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24. I. Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530–1740* (Oxford, 1996).
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26. George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple*, ch. 21, in *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1967), pp. 255–7.
27. John Rogers, *The Doctrine of Faith* (London, 1633), 99.
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33. *The Schleithem Articles*, in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 174–5.
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38. *Catalogue of the Pamphlets . . . Collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661*, 2 vols. (London, 1908); D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 174.
39. Heylyn, *Aerius Redivivus*, pp. 5–6.
40. *Christian Concord, or, the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire* (London, 1653), pp. 30–1. The London Presbyterians in 1651 also insisted on the necessity of discipline: 'Though we dare not make separation from a true Church, yet we doe make separation in a true Church' through pastoral discipline. See Giles Firmin, *Separation Examined* (London, 1652), p. 39.
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14 Radical Puritanism, c. 1558–1660

DAVID R. COMO

The concept of 'radical Puritanism' was popularised in the twentieth century by scholars intent on investigating groups that earlier commentators tended to call the 'sects' or 'dissenters' of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Until then, the study of these sects remained largely the preserve of denominational chroniclers; the early historians who pioneered the scientific study of English history showed little interest in the subject. These attitudes began to shift in the twentieth century, as new generations of scholars, fascinated by the apparently transformative and democratic political forces unleashed by the English Civil Wars, reconfigured Puritanism as a radical, or even revolutionary, ideology. In the post-war period, particular attention was often focused on the sectaries – separatists, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists and others – who played an indisputable role in what was increasingly described as an 'English Revolution'. Often (although not always) these sectarian forms of religion were assimilated under the rubric of 'radical Puritanism', understood as a synonym for what one historian termed 'Left-wing Puritan sects'.¹

Given this presumed analogy between sectarianism and modern forms of left-wing political agitation, it should come as no surprise that the study of radical religion reached its apogee in the early 1970s, culminating most spectacularly in the work of the Marxist historians A. L. Morton and Christopher Hill. Morton and Hill presented the world of Civil-War sectarian Puritanism as a revolutionary counter-culture, created by the marginal people of early modern society, and aimed at transforming the existing social order. The sectaries were now reborn as the ideological spokespersons of an emerging working-class consciousness, which developed in reaction to both the repressive remnants of the feudal social regime and the supposedly bourgeois ethic of discipline and social control peddled by mainline Puritans. The sectaries were thus 'radical' insofar as their beliefs and practices anticipated the more familiar progressive or leftist political/social demands of later periods,

and, at a secondary level, insofar as they embodied the aspirations of marginal or plebeian members of society.²

Yet by the early 1970s, the field had already begun the sharp turn that would eventually be known as revisionism. Attacking Whig-Marxist teleology, and calling into question the revolutionary nature of the Civil Wars, revisionists dismantled the edifice of interpretation that had been erected by previous generations. The history of Puritanism itself became one of the chief realms in which revisionist and subsequent post-revisionists began to rethink the field. The work of Patrick Collinson, Nicholas Tyacke and Peter Lake demonstrated, for instance, that Puritanism was a phenomenon very close to the centre of the English Protestant establishment, suggesting the godly were a less disruptive or revolutionary force than previous accounts had maintained (and thus, in some eyes, rendering less coherent the category of 'Puritanism', understood as a distinct, real, oppositional entity).³ From a different direction, John Morrill argued that Hill and others had placed too much emphasis on the sects, thus turning attention away from more widespread adherence to the traditional rites of the Church of England.⁴ Meanwhile, J. C. Davis argued that, by relying on hostile polemic, left-wing scholars had exaggerated both the cohesiveness and the radicalism of the sectaries.⁵ Indeed, in the eyes of some revisionist scholars, the whole notion of a pre-modern 'radicalism' began to look decidedly anachronistic.

Given, then, that the categories of 'Puritanism' and 'radicalism' have both been problematised in recent decades, it is crucial to define our terms at the outset. In the following chapter, the phrase 'radical Puritan' will refer to those Puritans who took ideas, imperatives or cultural presuppositions from within the broader Puritan amalgam, accentuated and reshaped those conventions, and then deployed them in ways that were regarded at the time as extreme, unorthodox or particularly corrosive of the status quo (whether in the ecclesiastical realm, the temporal realm or in terms of standing Christian orthodoxy). Such extreme variants of Puritan religiosity might, under certain circumstances, carry the sorts of 'progressive', even proto-leftist implications suggested by Hill and other previous scholars. But they did not necessarily do so. On this account, what identifies them as *radical* is not their conformity to some timeless, notional grid of progressive purity, but rather the fact that in their own day, the ideas and practices in question were regarded by most contemporaries (both Puritan and non-Puritan) as excessive and disruptive of right notions of orthodoxy or order. What identifies these variants as *Puritan* is the fact that we (and in

many cases, early modern observers) can see that they emerged organically as amplifications upon prior conventions of thought and practice that were current among English Puritans; and even more importantly, that this process of amplification and radicalisation took shape within the social matrix of the godly community.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND ITS CRITICS

The most familiar radical permutations of Puritanism developed as reactions against the ecclesiastical and liturgical structure of the English church. In the wake of the Elizabethan settlement, disaffected Protestants, influenced by continental ideas on church governance, developed a critique of the Church of England, with its supposedly popish vestments, its vestigial Catholic service and its imperfect discipline. By 1570, this critique had produced an increasingly intense agitation to reform the church along presbyterian lines, a story now familiar through Patrick Collinson's early work. Arguably, this agitation was in itself quite radical, at least in certain respects – a fact that led Collinson himself to characterise the presbyterian movement as a 'radical cause', and to liken its organisation to those of later 'revolutionary parties'.⁶

Most obviously, the presbyterians sought to transform the existing structure of the church in the teeth of the monarch's opposition. But at a deeper level, the presbyterian impulse revealed a series of potentially disruptive components, not least a tendency to level ecclesiastical hierarchy and to insist on the parity of ministers, a trait that was regarded with paramount suspicion by Elizabeth and her bishops. And although there was a strong hint of clericalism evident in the Puritan impulse – ministers, although equal to one another, were still taken to be God's ambassadors on earth – godly piety and practice also tended to encourage intense lay activism and participation (epitomised by presbyterian calls for parochial involvement in selection of ministers and the inclusion of lay elders in the classical system); this trait, although not *ipso facto* destructive of authority, could carry with it sometimes worrying consequences. In addition, the forms in which early Puritan Reformists tended to pursue their ends – appealing to popular, and typically lay, audiences to capture, or even construct, public opinion (and by extension, to pressure the government) through pamphleteering, lobbying parliament and petitioning – were seen to be both unusual and potentially subversive. Underlying all of these official anxieties was a more gnawing fear that, crudely put, the godly placed loyalty to their

own vision of true religion above loyalty to the crown (or, alternatively, that they wished to impose that vision on their sovereign, thus limiting the power of the monarchy), all of which was seen as tending towards disobedience, or even outright rebellion. To some extent, then, there was what might be termed a radical edge (or potential) buried within the heart of Puritanism from the very beginning. This was certainly what Elizabeth and her more hardline ecclesiastical advisors suspected, leading them to adopt increasingly draconian measures to squash Puritan opposition.

Yet as Collinson, Lake and others have reminded us, there were also many factors militating against the mutation of these tendencies into an open, oppositional front arrayed against the powers-that-were. Obsessed with maintaining order and a unitary orthodoxy, leading Elizabethan Puritans were often tied very closely to people at the centre of the political establishment, and their efforts for reform were typically cast as exercises in loyalty to what was, after all, an avowedly Protestant regime. Indeed, it was these tendencies towards cooperation with the authorities and reform from within which led Lake to describe Cartwright, Chaderton and other leading presbyterians as quintessential 'moderate Puritans'.⁷ Even as churchmen such as Whitgift and Bancroft angled to depict them as dangerous extremists, most presbyterians worked to situate themselves in the public eye as law-abiding subjects and zealous supporters of the English Protestant establishment. In part, then, what separated 'moderates' from 'radicals' was a willingness to identify with, and to work within, broader structures of authority in church and state. So, too, what mattered was the timbre of their activities. Thus, for instance, at the level of prescriptive order, there was no distinguishable difference between Cartwright's presbyterianism and the platform endorsed in the scurrilous, withering and entirely illegal invectives Martin Marprelate and his collaborators published and distributed against the bishops in 1588–9. Yet Marprelate's tone, manner of approach and polemical style were so boldly insolent, and so directly subversive of standing authority, that they clearly marked out the Marprelatists as extremists (an extremism which, unsurprisingly, proved deeply compromising for more cautious presbyterians, who soon found themselves tainted by association with the Marprelate enterprise, helping to destroy the classical movement as an organised force for reform).⁸

Presumably, a mixture of anger over perceived episcopal oppression, combined with frustration over the temerity and 'accommodationist' tendencies of many godly leaders, helped prompt not just the ill-fated

Marprelate venture, but also the almost simultaneous explosion of the most characteristic permutation of Puritan radicalism: separatism. Separatist impulses had been apparent from the 1560s, when the imposition of ceremonies had prompted some Londoners to withdraw from communion with their parochial churches and to gather together in clandestine conventicles.⁹ In the years that followed, as the queen showed herself resistant to further reform, this separatist impulse sharpened. Loose conventicles transformed into underground congregations, with their own ministers, discipline and church covenants. The separatist impulse quickly found its spokesmen: Robert Browne, and then later Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and Francis Johnson. These men denounced the Church of England – with its scripted prayers, its beastly, popish garments and its corrupt hierarchy – as irredeemably anti-Christian; the only conscionable response for good Christians was to withdraw, and to practise true religion in pure, gathered congregations.¹⁰

Yet equally important for these men, and the so-called ‘Brownists’ who followed them, was the fact that putatively godly people, including robust presbyterians, who collaborated with the existing order, were themselves deemed to be tainted by popery. This tendency to critique, and even to attack, fellow Puritans as insufficiently zealous, courageous or ideologically pure, was one of the fundamental characteristics not just of separatism, but of all the most radical species of Puritan religiosity. It meant that, from the very beginning, many of the chief interlocutors of the separatists (and other radical Puritans) were not central members of the ecclesiastical establishment, but other godly men and women.

Precisely because the separatist turn was widely regarded as an extreme solution – not to mention a dangerous one, which cost Barrow and Greenwood their lives – the impact and spread of such ideas was minimal. R.J. Acheson has argued that the number of Elizabethan separatists, gathered together in secret congregations, was very small indeed.¹¹ Yet some clearly withdrew from their parish assemblies without attaching themselves to formal congregations, while others fled abroad. By the 1590s, small numbers of Brownists had begun to migrate to the Netherlands, where *de facto* religious toleration allowed them to worship without the threat of state repression. While in the short term this may have reduced the threat of domestic religious radicalism, it also meant that Holland would become a kind of extremist outpost, allowing disaffected Puritans to move back and forth from England to a safe haven abroad, and creating an expatriate community which would serve as an incubator for radical religious ideas.¹² Of equal importance was the establishment of a network for printing and smuggling illegal books

from the Netherlands to England, a development that allowed religious radicals to exert an influence disproportionate to their numbers, particularly after Elizabeth died in 1603.¹³

Paradoxically, the reign of James I seems to have brought a substantial increase in separatist agitation. In part, this was a product of the disappointment that attended the discovery that the new king would be no more interested in further reform than Elizabeth. The failure of the Millenary Petition, the appointment of the arch-conservative Bancroft to Canterbury and the purge of rigid nonconformists which followed the promulgation of the 1604 canons combined to create a surge of nonconformist militancy, encouraging further defections from the established church. For instance, among the victims of Bancroft's 1604–5 campaign were John Robinson, Richard Clifton and John Smyth, three ministers who soon left the church as a result, creating a new separatist axis stretching through Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. Many members of this network soon emigrated to the Netherlands, bolstering the ranks of the Amsterdam separatists, before Robinson and his followers retired to Leiden, and from thence to Plymouth, Massachusetts.¹⁴

Partly, this response was conditioned by the collapse of presbyterianism. Where these ministers might earlier have found solace in the organised movement to reform the church from inside, in 1605 that option was no longer available. Many Puritans were now forced to make their peace with the established order, an impulse that was encouraged by the Jacobean habit of embracing nonconformists who showed a willingness to meet the authorities half-way.¹⁵ Without the option of funnelling hope and energy into a well-organised movement for reform, and confronted with the apparent apostasy and backsliding of many of their godly brethren, principled nonconformists faced a difficult choice. Some, such as William Bradshaw or Henry Jacob, refused to conform, but tried to craft new and mediating ecclesiological positions, ones that insisted that while God's perfect form of church government consisted of autonomous and self-governing congregations, the Church of England was not wholly anti-Christian, and absolute separation from it was not justified. This position – which has been dubbed 'non-separating congregationalism' – allowed its proponents to retain their principled defence of a stripped-down, apostolic church, while distancing themselves from what were perceived as some of the more subversive aspects of presbyterianism (to say nothing of the horrors of separatism). In time, it would prove remarkably influential, shaping the church polity of New England, as well as what would be called 'Independency' during the

1640s.¹⁶ Yet for some nonconformists, overt separatism now seemed the only logical path; their case suggests that it was the peculiar combination of initial persecution, followed by relative lenience, which helped to foster and spread separatist sentiment under James. Separatist activity can be charted in many parts of England during this period, with notable outposts springing up in the East Midlands, Kent, Wiltshire, Suffolk and Shropshire, with London serving throughout as a hub or centre-point.¹⁷

THEOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION

Despite their rejection of the Church of England, most separatists appear to have remained within accepted canons of Reformed doctrinal orthodoxy. Yet at its margins, the separatist community did evince a pronounced tendency towards theological innovation, particularly after the accession of James. Thus, the 1610s witnessed the emergence, at the separatist fringe, of a movement – led by the minister John Traske – which combined unorthodox soteriological beliefs, radical egalitarian tendencies and ostentatious observance of the Saturday Sabbath and other ‘Jewish’ rites and prohibitions. Similarly, as early as the 1590s, the Essex separatists, Walter, Thomas and Bartholomew Legate began to argue not only that the Church of England was false, but that there was no true church on earth, and that all ordinances should be suspended until the arrival of new Apostles signalled the coming of a new, divinely purified order. Even more fabulously, the Legates claimed that one of the pernicious superstitions that needed to be eradicated was the doctrine of the Trinity – a stand that would eventually carry Bartholomew to a flaming stake in Smithfield.¹⁸

But the paradigmatic case of separatist fragmentation can be seen in the career of John Smyth, who, after his flight to the Netherlands, came to the conclusion that the Church of England was so hopelessly corrupt that even its sacrament of infant baptism needed to be rejected. He re-baptised himself, and then proceeded to baptise his followers; from here, it was a short step to embracing more generally the principle of believers’ baptism. Smyth’s own congregation eventually split over the issue of whether to incorporate themselves into the Amsterdam Mennonite community; Thomas Helwys and a number of associates refused, and returned to London. Here, a small but tenacious Baptist community put down roots. During James’s reign, the London congregation was joined by affiliated groupings in Tiverton, Salisbury, Coventry and Lincoln, all of which seem to have retained connections to one another and to the

Low Countries. While it began as a logical extension of the separatist impulse, the extremity of the Anabaptist turn should not be underestimated, involving as it did a decision to repudiate not merely the English church, but centuries of Christian tradition and one of the most critical rituals of the early modern social fabric. Perhaps in part because of this fundamental rupture with the Christian past, the Anabaptists proved willing to shed other features of Reformed orthodoxy, most notably the doctrine of predestination, which Smyth and his followers quickly repudiated in favour of a more expansive doctrine of General Redemption.¹⁹

Partially unmoored from the Puritan community as a whole, and increasingly convinced of the diabolical nature not just of the church establishment, but also of those nonconformists who refused to put into practice their principles, some separatists thus showed a striking willingness to depart from the norms of standing Reformed orthodoxy, as laid out by the likes of Calvin and Beza. Fuelling these centrifugal forces was the widespread separatist assumption that believers needed to submit to the unmediated power of the Holy Spirit (a habit exemplified most clearly in their complete repudiation of 'stinted', or prescribed liturgy in favour of extemporaneous, free-form prayer). Such a reliance on spiritual inspiration, while not inevitably corrosive of orthodox belief, opened up a space for progressive divine revelation, channelled directly through the Holy Ghost – a process that was described succinctly by the slogan 'new light'. Such beliefs were often coupled with an intense eschatological or apocalyptic fervour, in which history was taken to be approaching some kind of divinely ordained climax, thus necessitating God's intervention to reveal hitherto hidden truths. In this vein, Traske, the Legates and other separatistic heretics often arrogated to themselves peculiar eschatological or prophetic roles, which justified their profound departures from orthodoxy.²⁰ Finally, it should be noted that all of these tendencies also made separatists and semi-separatists more susceptible to unorthodox theological traditions and influences, often derived from non-English sources. As noted, Smyth and his followers quickly turned to the Dutch Mennonites, a move that played a role (both positive and negative) in shaping English Baptist practice. So, too, it was apparently at the radical fringe that the ideas of Hendrik Nicolaes, the notorious messianic founder of the Family of Love, continued to survive and exert influence.²¹

Yet here, as in all other ways, separatists merely evinced tendencies or qualities – exaggerated and amplified, perhaps – that were embedded in the culture of English Puritanism. Despite their decision to abandon

the church, most separatists remained ensconced within the broader Puritan community, sharing values and social connections with less radical godly people, a fact sometimes obscured by the backbiting that flared up between them. Thus, the separatist fondness for extempore prayer and spiritist enthusiasm was an exaggerated version of similar traits that can be found among the most mainstream Puritans. Even the separatist habit of discovering new spiritual truths was in some ways an extension of widely held godly assumptions about the necessity of intensive lay participation: Puritan ministers had long exhorted their followers to 'try the spirits', that is, to apply their own portion of spiritual discernment to sermons, tracts and teachings of clergy and authorities so as to measure their godliness and usefulness. Pressed vigorously, this sort of lay scrutiny and activism could carry men and women in directions far beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. This tendency was most evident among separatists, who took lay activism and involvement to an extreme, allowing broad participation of lay people in quotidian religious services.²² Yet in this, separatists were simply ratcheting up a fierce lay activism that was manifest in Puritan prayer meetings and conventicles up and down the English countryside. Likewise the intense eschatological, even millenarian, fervour described above was quite common amongst mainstream Puritans, a fact that sometimes led less radical figures to adopt similar notions of new light and further revelation.

Unsurprisingly, then, very serious challenges to prevailing Reformed conceptions of orthodoxy sometimes developed not at the separatist fringe, but closer to the core of the godly community. The most important such challenge, which emerged in the 1610s and gathered steam in the 1620s, came from those labelled by their enemies as 'antinomians'. Antinomianism emerged as a reaction against trends that had come to dominate Puritan practical divinity by the second decade of the seventeenth century. Despite widespread and deep attachment to the formal doctrines of predestination and justification by faith alone, godly piety had from an early stage assumed an intense focus on sanctification – the arduous journey whereby the believer was progressively purged of sin. This was accomplished through assiduous application of 'ordinances' or 'means of grace' – preaching, frequent prayer, the sacraments, fasting, godly conference, as well as steely forms of inward spiritual discipline. Sanctification, pursued rigorously through these means, was regarded as the essence of the holy life, and the chief sign of a true, justifying faith. Antinomians rejected this ferocious regime of moral oversight, claiming that the godly obsession with sanctification

and holy duties compromised the Protestant message of free grace and seduced the people of God back into works righteousness and legalism. While they often portrayed themselves as pious Protestant Restorationists, however, antinomians in fact adopted a series of extreme theological opinions, which marked them out as dangerous radicals and exposed them to charges of heresy. Most notoriously, they claimed, against the supposed legalism of their enemies, that truly converted Christians were in some sense free from the commanding power of the Moral Law. Some antinomians, influenced at times by Familist or other mystical texts, went even further, hinting that God's chosen were in a sense unified with God, and could hence view themselves as perfect, even divine. Such opinions were for obvious reasons seen as dangerously unorthodox, but the hostility of both mainstream Puritans and the ecclesiastical authorities could not completely staunch these ideas, which, from shadowy beginnings in the conventicles of ministers such as Roger Brearley, John Eaton and Robert Towne, spread to many parts of England, including Yorkshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and, of course, London, which served as the epicentre for this small but tenacious Dissident movement.²³

While the attentions of the authorities ensured that this movement remained in check in pre-war England, in the rather less restrictive air of Massachusetts, where Puritans had begun to settle in large numbers by the 1630s, such ideas quickly sparked significant controversy, resulting in the nasty chain of events usually known as the 'Antinomian Controversy' of 1636–8. Here, an insurgent faction in Boston, feeding off the theological ideas of the ministers John Cotton and John Wheelwright, and led by charismatic lay people such as Henry Vane Jr and Anne Hutchinson, nearly split the fledgling Bay Colony in two, prompting a series of acrimonious disputations, trials and banishments. While scholars disagree as to whether Hutchinson, Wheelwright and their followers should be characterised as fully fledged antinomians, the fact that their enemies characterised them as such, and so quickly assimilated their beliefs to those circulating in England at the time, bears witness to the extent to which antinomian ideas had spread through the godly community in recent years, as well as the depth of the alarm and paranoia that such opinions elicited among mainstream Puritans who found themselves denounced as pharisees and legalists.²⁴

Yet if antinomianism emerged out of the Puritan community, as a critique of widespread conventions of godly piety, it is also true that what energised the movement was the broader political and ecclesiastical situation of the 1620s and 1630s, most notably the rise of

Laudianism, with its aggressive anti-Calvinism and its tendency to stress outward liturgy and devotional works. Antinomians thus positioned themselves as the only true defenders of free grace at a moment when many English Puritans and Calvinists were fretting over the ascendancy of churchmen who were seen as crypto-popish work-mongers (which was apparently part of what gave the movement traction).

This was indicative of a broader pattern of destabilisation sparked by the shift in ecclesiastical politics which began in the last years of James I, then accelerated after the accession of Charles I in 1625. The gradual but pronounced Laudian takeover, and the concomitant imposition of a more rigorous regime of ceremonial conformity, led paradoxically to an intensification of nonconformist radicalism, as well as a spread of sectarian activity throughout England. As the Jacobean accommodation disintegrated, and as the pincers of Laudian conformity closed, many previously compliant moderate Puritans found themselves radicalised. Some moved into positions of open defiance against the regime. Others fled to New England, lured by the promise of a society organised around gathered congregations of visible saints. The most extreme responded to the new repression by separating entirely from the church. The late 1620s and 1630s thus witnessed a proliferation of new underground congregations in London, as well as separatist penetration of areas which had hitherto remained relatively unscathed, including Bristol, the Welsh marches, Devon and Warwickshire; areas with long traditions of separatism, such as Essex, Norfolk and Kent, also seem to have witnessed an upsurge of separatist activity.²⁵ A fresh wave of conversions to Anabaptism likewise took place, particularly in London, where ultra-separatism and increasing disaffection with the church led to the emergence of new, Calvinistic Baptist congregations.²⁶ Caroline church policy, intended to impose uniformity and to eradicate factious Puritan nonconformity, ultimately had the effect of polarising the country, and driving many hitherto pliable subjects into various forms of religious extremism.

THE CIVIL WARS AND REVOLUTION

Indeed, it might be suggested that by 1640 the entire politico-ecclesiastical spectrum had shifted in what could be termed a radical direction. Many peaceable and conformable godly people had been driven towards positions of nonconformist intransigence; overtly Congregationalist or Presbyterian ideas, which in 1620 had been confined to

a small band of outliers, had not only come back into fashion, but now began to look positively mainstream. Thus, in 1640, when England's great political crisis descended, activists in London were quickly able to mobilise 15,000 signatures for the Root and Branch petition, calling for the abolition of episcopacy.

Yet the crisis of 1640 also unleashed the forces of sectarian Puritanism. Preachers and propagandists who had been forced to operate secretly prior to the start of the Long Parliament now emerged into the open to disseminate ideas that had previously been proscribed. The result was a dramatic increase in both the numbers and the boldness of radical Puritans. Even more alarmingly, the unchaining of these previously forbidden ideas led to a process of experimentation and hybridisation, as people appropriated bits and pieces of these mutating Puritan variants to create new forms of religiosity. Thus, many Anabaptists embraced antinomianism, while some antinomians paradoxically attached their ideas to anti-Calvinist notions of General Redemption. All of these ideas were often filtered through a heightened sense of millennial expectation, informed by the turbulent experience of civil war. Novel theological ideas spread more widely than ever before, infecting previously uncorrupted parts of England, and drifting inexorably to New England, where various forms of Anabaptism and spiritism would persist for decades to come.²⁷ The resulting cacophony of ideas of course alarmed many more traditional Puritans, and led to new rounds of fierce and polarising debate in print and pulpit, which in many cases probably did more to accelerate than to contain these centrifugal processes. The classic example may be seen in the career of the young tailor and sometime New Model Army preacher Lawrence Clarkson, who began his spiritual pilgrimage in the early 1640s with Presbyterianism, then progressed on through Congregationalism, antinomianism and Anabaptism, before rejecting all outward ordinances, and embracing the transgressive egalitarian antinomianism of the Ranters; he would die, after the Restoration, as a follower of the London plebeian prophet Lodowick Muggleton.²⁸

By 1646, Clarkson's pilgrimage had led him to modes of religiosity which departed so completely from orthodoxy that they can only in the most remote sense be called 'Puritan'. Yet this should not obscure the genealogical process through which these radically antiformalist modes of worship had sprung from Puritanism itself. This is perhaps most evident in the emergence of the most emblematic of all the Civil-War sects, the Quakers, who burst onto the scene in the early 1650s. Quakerism brought together antinomian perfectionism, enthusiastic

spirit-mysticism, extreme antiformalism and a virulently anti-Calvinistic universalism – a form of piety, in short, that in many ways inverted the conventions of mainstream Puritan devotion. Nevertheless, all of these features of Quaker worship can be seen to have emerged, sometimes dialectically and as a result of internal dispute, from within the bosom of the godly community over the preceding decades; similarly most of the earliest Quakers were drawn from Independent or sectarian congregations, and much of the evangelical energy of the movement was devoted to attacking Puritan ministers and proselytising within the godly social networks whence the early Friends had come.

But if these exotic variants of Puritanism represented radical challenges to notions of orthodoxy and ecclesiastical order, in what sense did they challenge the social or political order, or even, as Hill and others suggested, embody a kind of revolutionary, plebeian insurgency? The evidence makes it difficult to sustain the case that radical Puritanism was specifically generated by, or geared towards, members of the lower orders. From its beginnings, the separatist movement found supporters amongst the gentry and well-heeled businessmen, while many of its chief polemicists were learned, university-trained intellectuals. The same can be said for pre-war antinomianism.²⁹ As Nicholas McDowell has argued, the impression that the sectaries were illiterate plebs is something of an illusion, based in part upon the hysterical claims of hostile opponents, and in part upon the rhetorical self-positioning of the radicals themselves.³⁰

Nor, it should be said, did Puritan extremism lead ineluctably to the sorts of progressive political and social agitation we now attach to the word 'radical'. Indeed, in some cases, as with the boxmaker John Etherington, radical theological conclusions could be coupled to a kind of quietism, which reaffirmed aspects of the existing ecclesiastical or political order.³¹ Yet even if there was not a *necessary* link between sectarian Puritanism and disruptive or subversive political and social practices, there was nonetheless an observable and real correlation. For the fact remains that the 1640s did witness the emergence of ideologies and political programmes that deeply challenged, even subverted the social and political status quo. In many cases, these programmes were promoted aggressively, sometimes exclusively, by actors at the sectarian margins of the Puritan community, a fact that surely demands some attempt at explanation.

The reasons for this are complicated and multifarious. Part of the solution lies with the environment of conventicles and intense lay activism in which sectarian Puritans worshipped and proselytised. This

environment produced gifted lay preachers and exegetes, thus taking longstanding Puritan notions of 'parity' to their logical conclusion, and effectively delegitimising the notion of a trained, ordained ministry. Moreover, by affirming that even humble men and women could be the true stewards of God's Word, radical Puritans subtly pushed towards a more general, if inchoate egalitarianism, which downgraded the importance of learning and social status, while exalting humility, lowliness or even poverty (ideas that were sometimes, perhaps paradoxically, articulated by learned clerics or lettered lay people of middling or gentle social status). During the 1640s, the notion that 'God is no respecter of persons', that is, that God did not take into account human greatness or academic qualification, but viewed all people as essentially equal (hence implying that humans should do the same), became a ubiquitous rallying cry, one that can be detected in the rhetoric of a whole range of disparate radical groupings, including the Levellers, Quakers, Ranters and Diggers. This egalitarianism undergirded numerous varieties of Civil-War political radicalism, many of which at some level demanded a greater share in government, or greater economic justice, for non-elite people and groups.

Yet while the environment of radical Puritan piety was crucial to fostering this sense of egalitarianism, it was the sectarians' conflictual and dialectical relationship with the Puritan mainstream that provides a second crucial key to understanding the emergence of the more socially challenging versions of Puritanism. From the beginning, sectaries had attempted to distinguish themselves sharply from the corrupt mass of Christians, and even more particularly from the allegedly cowardly and hypocritical professors of the godly community at large. This sometimes led to a set of manoeuvres in which true, or apostolic Christianity was identified with the cause of the poor, of charity or of the redistribution of wealth – imperatives that were set in opposition to the supposedly miserly and self-serving beliefs and practices that characterised the false brethren of the Puritan community at large. In this vein, for instance, as early as 1615, at least some of the Traskites practised a form of Christian communism.³² This dynamic would repeat itself with a vengeance in the 1640s and 1650s, as numerous sectarian groupings aligned themselves with the poor and downtrodden, denounced conventions of hierarchy and status, plumped for legal or political reforms that were to free the common people from bondage or called for more equitable distribution of wealth (even, as in the case of Gerrard Winstanley and his Digger supporters, for the abolition of private property). All of these forms of radicalism expressed themselves at least partly, sometimes very explicitly, in

opposition to the supposedly un-Christian and hypocritical practices of putative professors of Christianity – above all, of other Puritans.³³

Yet we should not underestimate the importance of the very contingent and unusual events of the moment. For although it is possible to see these tendencies hovering at the sectarian fringe in the pre-war years, it was only the chaos and turmoil of the 1640s that allowed those tendencies to metastasise into the now familiar world of the revolutionary sects. Thus, for instance, the relative collapse of mechanisms for censorship and ecclesiastical discipline allowed free rein to the more anarchic tendencies of underground, sectarian worship, accelerating processes of lay and female participation. So, likewise, the terror, hopes and dislocations of the 1640s amplified and projected the deep apocalypticism that was always a strong current in godly religion, giving rise to a sense of impending transformation which allowed people to imagine new configurations of power or human social organisation. In this, the sectarians were not alone. Such a sense of cosmic transformation or climax was rife among Puritans in the 1640s; but as had always been the case, these tendencies were particularly acute among radical Puritans, and when combined with the potentially subversive tendencies towards egalitarianism noted above, could often lead to radical or utopian visions of millennial rupture. Again, however, these visions often drew upon political or religious ideas that had earned a very wide currency among parliamentary supporters during the 1640s – ideas of popular sovereignty, or the appropriateness of ejecting corrupt clerical elites, for instance, both of which had spread far and wide by 1643. If, then, the sectaries reshaped those ideas and put them to new and sometimes very radical purposes, it must be recognised that they were only able to do so because the remarkable circumstances of the 1640s were themselves, in a deep and unprecedented way, disruptive of reigning notions of orthodoxy, hierarchy and right governance. And arguably, this disruption had flowed, at least in part, from the unleashing of the radical potentialities that had, from the very outset, sat at the core of Puritan worship.

Notes

1. T. Pease, *The Leveller Movement* (Washington, DC, 1916); J. F. Maclear, 'Quakerism and the end of the Interregnum: a chapter in the domestication of radical Puritanism', *Church History*, 19 (1950), 240, for quotation; G. Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History: With Special Reference to the Period 1640–1660* (London, 1951); D. B. Robertson, *The Religious Foundations of Leveller Democracy* (New York, 1951); W. Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*

- (New York, 1955); L. Solt, *Saints in Arms* (Stanford, 1959); M. Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge, MA, 1965); B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (Totowa, NJ, 1972); J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984).
2. A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London, 1970); C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*, (London, 1972). Both Morton and Hill shied away from the term 'radical Puritanism', since both were keen to distance their sectarians from the allegedly bourgeois mainstream of English Puritanism.
 3. P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford, 1982); P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982); N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* (Oxford, 1987).
 4. J. Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642–1649', in J. Morrill, ed., *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642–1649* (London, 1982).
 5. J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986).
 6. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), p. 326 and passim.
 7. Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, passim. As Lake suggested, however, the obverse of this was that there were very radical currents absorbed into the church.
 8. On Marprelate, see Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 391–416; L. Carlson, *Martin Marprelate, Gentleman* (San Marino, 1981); P. Lake and M. Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven and London, 2002), pp. 505–37.
 9. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 86–91.
 10. See esp. B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford, 1971).
 11. R. J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England 1550–1660* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 17–18.
 12. See K. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism* (Leiden, 1982).
 13. See esp. K. Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower* (Leiden, 1994).
 14. R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1560–1642* (London, 1960), pp. 137–66. Robinson himself did not emigrate to Plymouth.
 15. K. Fincham and P. Lake, 'The ecclesiastical policy of James I', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1984), 169–207.
 16. For the classic treatment, see P. Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA, 1933).
 17. J. Rowe, 'Some Suffolk separatists and the Norwich conventicle 1588–1610', in C. Rawcliffe, R. Virgoe and R. Wilson, eds., *Counties and Communities* (Norwich, 1996); National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS. 33.1.6, vol. 20, fos. 58–9; Cambridge University Library, MS. Mm. vi. 50, fols. 189–206; M. Ingram, 'Puritans and the church courts, 1560–1640', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism* (New York, 1996), p. 84; Acheson, *Radical Puritans*, pp. 20–1, 25–6; I. Gentles, 'London Levellers in the English Revolution: the Chidleys and their circle', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 29

- (1978), 282–3, for evidence of separatism in Shrewsbury by the mid-1620s.
18. D. Como, *Blown by the Spirit* (Stanford, 2004), pp. 138–75; I. Atherton and D. Como, 'The burning of Edward Wightman: Puritanism, prelacy and the politics of heresy in early modern England', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 1215–50; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, art. Bartholomew Legate.
 19. C. Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1912), I. 220–80; White, *Separatist Tradition*, pp. 116–41; for a more nuanced and extensive attempt to analyse the theological and ecclesiological issues, see S. Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge, 2006).
 20. Como, *Blown*, p. 146; Atherton and Como, 'Edward Wightman'.
 21. See P. Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge* (Stanford, 2001); on Familist survivalism, see Como, *Blown*, passim.
 22. Burrage, *Dissenters*, II. 177; British Library, Add. MS. 29492, fol. 111r.
 23. For this and the previous paragraph, see Como, *Blown*, passim; T. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).
 24. For the New England controversy, see especially M. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts* (Princeton, 2002); Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*.
 25. *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–1687*, ed. R. Hayden, Bristol Record Society, 27 (1974), 85–90; J. Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 67–8; Bodleian Library, MS. J. Walker c. 5, fols. 146r–9v; D. Oldridge, *Religion and Society in Early Stuart England* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 121–31; W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 276–7, 289–90; M. Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and their Opponents in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 86–107; Acheson, *Radical Puritans*, pp. 35–40.
 26. On London, see M. Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 1–49.
 27. For an overview of the New England scene, see P. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory* (Middletown, CT, 1984).
 28. See L. Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660).
 29. For separatism, see, e.g., Marchant, *Puritans and the Church Courts*, pp. 137–66; Oldridge, *Religion and Society*, pp. 121–31; Acheson, *Radical Puritans*, p. 90. For antinomianism, see Como, *Blown*, pp. 49–52.
 30. N. McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination* (Oxford, 2003).
 31. Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*.
 32. Como, *Blown*, pp. 161–2.
 33. For an example, see [W. Walwyn], *The Power of Love* (London, 1643).

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15 Puritan millenarianism in Old and New England

JEFFREY K. JUE

In 1629 William Twisse sent an intriguing letter to his close friend, the Cambridge divine Joseph Mede. Twisse wrote,

I seem to discern a providence of God in causing the opinion of a Thousand years *Regnum Sanctorum* to be blasted as an Error by the censure passed upon the Chiliasts, to take men from fixing their thoughts too much on that in those days, when the accomplishment was so far removed; but with purpose to revive it in a more seasonable time, when Antichrist's kingdom should draw near to an end.¹

Twisse was recounting the history of millenarianism, in which the early church condemned the patristic form of this doctrine, known as chiliasm. Not only did the early church censure chiliasm, but by the seventeenth century all three major branches of the Protestant church condemned this eschatological position in their confessional standards. The Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530, the English Forty-Two Articles of Religion of 1552 and the Reformed Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 unanimously repudiated millenarianism.² Yet, Twisse's letter indicated a revival of millenarian interest during the more 'seasonable time' of his day. By the seventeenth century millenarianism was acceptable and popular amongst many Puritans. This introduces a puzzling historical question: how do we explain the rebirth and popularity of such a controversial doctrine amongst seventeenth-century Puritans? In addition, what is the precise relation between millenarianism and Puritanism?

Historians in the 1970s attempted to answer this question by aligning the rise of millenarianism in the early seventeenth century with the growing revolutionary fervour exhibited by radical Puritans.³ Following a socio-historical analysis, these historians argued that millenarianism provided a divine apocalyptic motivation for oppressed and disenfranchised Puritans in their struggle for social, political and

economic reforms. These historians were less concerned about specific theological definitions and exegetical details; instead they employed a sociological definition of millenarianism, which frequently associated millenarianism with revolution. Thus, revolt was justified by the desire to replace all ungodly monarchic rule with the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

However, the 1980s and 1990s saw the publication of a wave of revisionist studies that challenged the received historiography of the 1970s. One important revision was the reconsideration of the religious and theological background to the English Civil War.⁴ The impact of doctrinal discussions over church polity, predestination, sacraments and the doctrine of justification were carefully examined.⁵ Likewise Puritan eschatology, and more specifically millenarianism, has become a topic of renewed scholarly interest and new studies on this topic are contributing to the ongoing and necessary revision of all facets of Puritan studies.⁶ These studies again attempt to answer the fundamental historical questions regarding the rebirth, impact and legacy of Puritan millenarianism in the seventeenth century.

REBIRTH OF MILLENARIANISM

As already stated, a number of earlier studies attempted to assess millenarianism according to broad sociological categories. These studies subsumed in their definition of millenarianism all revolutionary movements which employed apocalyptic language and/or adopted an 'idea of progress', which anticipated an imminent perfect social world.⁷ However, in utilising such a broad definition, these studies inaccurately represented historical millenarians, perpetuated misconceptions and failed to account for variations and nuances within the millenarian tradition. Alternatively, defining seventeenth-century millenarianism with concepts and terms that millenarians would have recognised themselves provides a more accurate picture of the structure, nature and impact of this doctrine.

Strictly defined, millenarianism is an eschatology derived from the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation. This chapter describes the vision of the Apostle John where he sees Satan bound and thrown into the abyss, and a first resurrection of the martyrs who reign with Jesus Christ on earth for one thousand years. When the one thousand years are completed, Satan will be released for a little while, and then there will be a final battle against Gog and Magog, which will conclude with the Day of Judgement and the Universal Resurrection. Puritan millenarians

understood that this prophetic vision would be fulfilled literally in specific geo-political and spiritual events which had yet to occur but, as Twisse indicated to Mede, were now near at hand. In addition, most millenarians anticipated a mass conversion of ethnic Jews prior to the arrival of the millennium. This national conversion served as a prophetic signpost marking the inauguration of Christ's earthly kingdom. But what would lead Twisse and other millenarians to assume that the fulfilment of this vision was so imminent?

It was indicated earlier that by the end of the sixteenth century the three major branches of Protestantism condemned millenarianism. The majority of Protestants in the sixteenth century followed the medieval tradition of interpreting Revelation 20 according to Saint Augustine. Instead of viewing the millennium as a strictly future event, Augustine believed the millennium was symbolically describing the period between Christ's first advent and his Second Coming at the end of history.⁸ Augustine's interpretation dominated medieval and early Reformation exegesis on the Apocalypse. However, in handling one specific biblical prophecy, Martin Luther broke with the Augustinian tradition. In the preface to Luther's 1522 translation of the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation) he questioned the usefulness of this biblical book and even its place within the biblical canon. However, in the 1530 preface, Luther was enthusiastic in his endorsement of this mysterious book.⁹ What accounts for Luther's change of heart? Heiko Oberman argued that the apocalyptic dimension of Luther's thought must not be ignored.¹⁰ By 1530 Martin Luther was convinced that the Papacy was the prophetic Antichrist, which subsequently framed the Protestant struggle against Roman Catholicism (both the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic nations) in the grandest apocalyptic terms. Ultimately Luther believed he was engaged in a cosmic war between God and the Devil. From 1530 on, nearly all Protestants, from John Calvin to Jonathan Edwards in eighteenth-century North America maintained this apocalyptic perspective.

Likewise the influence of Luther's apocalyptic discovery was felt in England, particularly during the reign of Mary I. Mary's persecution of Protestants compelled many to seek refuge in the Reformed continental cities of Zurich, Strasbourg and Geneva. In Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger understood the apocalyptic significance of these events by preaching one hundred and one sermons on Revelation. In the preface of the published sermons he dedicated the volume to the Protestant refugees from Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy and England.¹¹ Bullinger is also hermeneutically significant for shifting away from a symbolic or

spiritual interpretation to a literal interpretation of the millennium. He, along with other Protestant theologians like Franciscus Junius in Leiden, and later David Pareus in Heidelberg, all agreed that the millennium was a literal 1,000-year period, but they placed it in the past. They gave several options for the dates: either from roughly AD 1 to AD 1000, or from the rise of Constantine in AD 300 to AD 1300. However, a difficulty emerged for this reading when Protestants began to date the appearance of the Antichrist. Historically Protestants began to mark the beginning of the decline of the church and thus the emergence of the Antichrist, already in the first millennium; consequently the period of the millennial kingdom overlapped with the rise of the Antichrist. But how could the saints reign (according to Revelation 20) at the same time as the Antichrist?¹² This was a historical problem that needed to be rectified, and millenarianism provided a helpful solution.

By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Protestant apocalyptic interest was almost always accompanied by a gripping fear of popery. Within England anti-Catholic sentiment reached a fever pitch with rumours of Jesuit conspiracies, Spanish military aggression and the infamous Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Puritans watched anxiously when the Thirty Years' War broke out in 1618, sparked by the decision of James I's son-in-law, Frederick of the Palatinate, to accept the crown of Bohemia after its Protestant nobles had rebelled against the Catholic emperor. The defeat of Frederick in 1620 was seen as a victory for the Antichrist, but the triumphs of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus in the 1630s gave great hope to the Protestant cause. However, hopes were dashed for a time when Gustavus died in 1632. Thus, following Luther, the continual belligerence between Protestants and Roman Catholics was viewed as an apocalyptic sign and this context provided fertile soil for the seeds of millenarianism to take root and grow.

In 1627 two books written by two prominent theologians inaugurated the rebirth of millenarianism and astoundingly transformed Protestants' attitudes towards this once heretical doctrine. On the continent Johann Heinrich Alsted, the professor of theology from Herborn, published his *Diatribē de mille annis apocalypticis*, while in Cambridge Joseph Mede, a fellow at Christ's College, completed his book entitled *Clavis Apocalyptica*.¹³ Both of these works presented a millenarian interpretation of Revelation 20.¹⁴ Alsted and Mede were not the first millenarians in their respective countries. Johannes Piscator, Alsted's teacher and later colleague in Herborn, and Thomas Brightman in England both published their conclusions earlier. However, the

influence of Alsted and Mede exceeded that of their predecessors. Alsted's influence was primarily felt on the continent, while at Cambridge University Mede's millenarian interpretations fascinated his devoted students.

Accounting for Alsted and Mede's millenarianism uncovers two divergent paths. Alsted's experiences in war-torn central Europe left an indelible impression on his eschatology. He fled as a refugee from his homeland, and after seeing the devastation of war first-hand, Alsted concluded that the millennium could not be a past or present reality. Instead he projected the glorious millennium and the reign of the saints into the future. For Alsted, the hope of a future millennium served as a comfort for the suffering church. In contrast Mede spent his entire adult life as a teacher and scholar in the comforts of Christ's College. Mede did witness some of the intense political and ecclesiastical debates in the 1620s and 1630s, but his millenarianism was the product of his rigorous study of the Book of Revelation and not a revolutionary agenda.

For Mede, the key or '*clavis*' to unlocking the meaning of this book lay in matching the corresponding numbers and symbols in each chapter of the book, what he called the method of 'synchronisms'.¹⁵ Using these synchronisms, Mede constructed a chronological sequence for all the visions and then he thoroughly applied a literal hermeneutic that identified specific historical fulfilments for each of the visions. With the pope and the Roman Catholic Church still holding power, Mede believed his own time had yet to see the 'binding of Satan' and the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom. Likewise Mede employed a vast range of patristic and Judaic sources to support his exegetical conclusions. The intellectual weight of Mede's arguments earned him the praise and admiration of students, colleagues and the international scholarly community.

THE IMPACT OF MILLENARIANISM: FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO THE INTERREGNUM

The rebirth of Protestant millenarianism marked initially by the writings of Alsted and Mede had a profound impact on the English Puritans. After the accession of Charles I to the throne in 1625, the Church of England quickly descended into controversy and divisions. Archbishop William Laud instituted more ceremonial and ritualistic forms of worship, and he shifted the emphasis away from the sermon to the sacraments. These practices outraged Puritans and they feared that Laud was steering the church back to Rome. In this environment of

suspicion and hostility, millenarian interpretations played a vital role. It is important to remember that the political and ecclesiastical debates were very complex. Alliances and parties did not always fall into simple and neat categories. While Mede was explicating the mysteries of biblical prophecy he was likewise defending the practices of the Laudian establishment.¹⁶ Mede dedicated two of his earlier works on worship and ecclesiology to Laud and John Cosin; and at one point he was even offered a position as Laud's household chaplain.¹⁷ Yet Mede was never openly attacked for his ecclesiology or broader theology (he was not a Calvinist). Comparing Mede's positions on nearly every major defining Puritan doctrine, one would conclude that Mede was no Puritan, yet it seems as if some Puritans overlooked this and chose instead to embrace his millenarianism. Thus, seventeenth-century millenarianism, as re-introduced by Mede, was not strictly or exclusively a Puritan doctrine.

Moreover, in the eyes of Protestant apocalypticists, Laud committed the most heinous transgression. In 1633 Laud banned all publications that identified Rome or the Papacy as the Antichrist.¹⁸ Puritans were outraged and even Mede lamented this action. Mede wrote to Twisse in 1635 suggesting that his ecclesiastical career was stifled because he insisted on this foundational prophetic identification.¹⁹ For Mede, the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy were demonic institutions. He criticised the cult of saints as the doctrine of demons prophesied in I Timothy 4:1 as the great apostasy of the latter times.²⁰ In addition Mede anticipated the fall of the Antichrist before the inauguration of the millennial kingdom. In a nation already divided over politics and other doctrines, Mede's millenarianism provided another justifiable grievance for some protesting Puritans.

Joseph Mede died in 1638 before the outbreak of war. Yet even without the English millenarian patriarch, millenarianism continued to impact on England during the 1640s and 1650s. In Scotland, Scottish Presbyterians resisted Laud's attempt to impose the use of a prayer book. After the signing of the National Covenant, the Scottish army attacked northern England, while the Long Parliament deliberated in the south. Likewise in Ireland, Irish Catholics, supposedly supporting the king, rebelled and word spread that 100,000 Protestants had been massacred. The Protestants' fears of popery and the Antichrist were confirmed, and the king himself was thought to be allied with these demonic forces. The opportunity for Puritans to oppose Charles I and to dismantle the Laudian church was at hand. On 1 December 1641, parliament issued its Grand Remonstrance against the king. In the midst of this turmoil, millenarianism provided a theological context in which to frame decisive political

and military action. Sermons at parliament were coloured with apocalyptic images. Jeremiah Burroughes, Stephen Marshall and William Bridge called for parliament to act as God's instrument in rooting out the Antichrist.²¹ Pamphlets and books surfaced correlating events in Britain with millenarian ideas. *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, most likely authored by Jeremiah Burroughes and published in 1641, and John Archer's *The Personall Reign of Christ upon Earth*, published in 1642, encouraged millenarian hopes. Most significantly, in 1643, parliament authorised the translation and republication of Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*. The translation was completed by Richard More, a member of parliament, and this new edition significantly contributed to the propaganda war waged against Charles and his bishops, who were condemned as the servants of the Antichrist. It is important to clarify that not everyone supported the radical actions of the parliament, nor did millenarianism serve as the primary motivating factor for action. The Grand Remonstrance did not include millenarian language. Instead, within the received Protestant apocalyptic tradition, millenarianism provided a punctuating element alongside other significant motivating factors which combined to produce a combustible mixture.

Likewise in 1643 parliament appointed an assembly of divines charged with the task of 'settling the government and liturgy of the Church of England; and for vindicating and clearing the doctrine of the said Church from false aspersions and interpretations'.²² The assembly gathered in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey and ultimately produced the Westminster Confession, Larger and Shorter Catechism, and Directory of Public Worship. Hotly debated was the issue of church polity. The Dissenting Brethren, or Independents, vigorously argued for a Congregational government, but with the addition of Scottish commissioners, after the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant, Presbyterianism eventually triumphed. While eschatology was not a point of debate, the writings of a number of prominent divines reveal their millenarian sympathies, including William Twisse, Thomas Goodwin, Jeremiah Burroughes, William Bridge and John Dury. Such was the prevalence of millenarianism at the Assembly that the Scottish delegate Robert Baillie wrote home complaining about the number of 'chiliasts' in attendance.²³ It is also interesting to note that John Milton, although a strong critic of the Assembly, shared the same millenarian doctrines as many of the divines.²⁴ Of course, like these divines, Milton was influenced by Mede.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that not everyone was enamoured with millenarianism; in fact some were quite critical of this

doctrine. In 1629 the schoolmaster Thomas Hayne exchanged a series of letters with Mede, challenging Mede's millenarian conclusions. He commented that Mede was his 'worthy and learned friend, but not to be preferred before truth'.²⁵ Similarly, Thomas Edwards disagreed with his millenarian former Cambridge classmates when he produced his heresiography, *Gangraena*, published in 1646.²⁶ Furthermore, millenarianism was very unpopular in Scotland. In addition to Robert Baillie, George Gillespie, James Durham and Samuel Rutherford all repudiated millenarianism.²⁷ Even after leaving Scotland for Rotterdam, in 1644 Alexander Petrie wrote an anti-millenarian book, specifically dismissing Mede's method of synchronisms.²⁸ While millenarianism had a remarkable impact on Puritanism, it was not unanimously embraced.

As reports from the battlefield mounted, Puritan attention turned from parliament as the main instrument of God to the army. Although the Westminster Assembly eventually supported Presbyterianism, it was the Independents who dominated the army and (eventually) parliament too. Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army achieved great success in battle, while their chaplains encouraged millenarian ideas within the ranks. Millenarians anticipated the fulfilment of the prophecy in Daniel 7 that after four successive earthly monarchies were destroyed, a fifth godly monarchy, equated with the millennium of Revelation 20, would be established. In 1647 Charles signed a treaty with the Scots, but the following year Cromwell defeated the combined armies of Scotland and the king. Charles's execution in 1649 signalled the possible fruition of Daniel's prophecy.

With the defeat of Scotland and Charles, Presbyterians were expelled from parliament, and the remaining members formed the Rump Parliament. This new parliament was justified as the instrument for destroying the Antichrist and preserving a faithful and godly nation. No less than the Puritan John Owen, preaching with Cromwell in attendance, declared that anti-Christian tyrants must be shaken and that God would transform governments in order to safeguard godly rule and help to establish the kingdom of Christ.²⁹ The Anglo-Dutch war, while primarily a trade war, was also perceived by many as a necessary course for restoring the Dutch to a true faith and striking again at the Roman Catholic Antichrist. The Dutch were seen as apostates for their materialism and thus drifting towards the influence of the Antichrist. English theologians like Owen and military leaders like Major-General Thomas Harrison couched their support for the war in apocalyptic rhetoric.³⁰

In England, Cromwell staged a military coup in 1653 to dissolve the Rump Parliament. The hope was to establish a godlier parliament to rule

England; and Cromwell and his senior officers selected the new members to the Nominated Assembly, or the 'Barebones' Parliament, nicknamed after one of the members, Praise-God Barebones.³¹ The new parliament was comprised of various groups, with varying agendas. Moderates and radicals split over a number of issues and the moderates worried that the radicals would destabilise the nation in their attempt to abolish tithes and revise the legal system. Unable to pacify the radicals, in December 1653 the moderate majority resigned and returned power to Cromwell. The radical minority was outraged and the emergence of the Fifth Monarchists provided a millenarian expression for dissatisfaction.

The Fifth Monarchists were fuelled by millenarian doctrines. Led by Thomas Harrison and other preachers, they opposed Cromwell's rule, claiming that Christ and not Cromwell should reign over them. The Fifth Monarchists believed that the millennial kingdom could be hastened by their direct labours. Subsequently, in their interpretation, millennial expectations were linked with radical activism. The rise of the Fifth Monarchists introduced a level of caution for those who did not share their radical social and political agenda, yet it did not deter the millenarian commitments of those who supported Cromwell. Thomas Goodwin felt it necessary to distinguish his millenarianism from that of the Fifth Monarchists in the mid-1650s.³² Moreover, contrary to what some have suggested, even Cromwell continued to be influenced by aspects of millenarianism, particularly in his decision to readmit the Jews to England in 1656.³³

In addition to the political context, the impact of millenarianism can be seen in less violent seventeenth-century agendas. Universal reform was the lifelong work of John Dury, Samuel Hartlib and Jan Amos Comenius. All three were committed millenarians. Dury and Hartlib corresponded regularly with Mede, while Comenius studied under Alsted in Herborn.³⁴ Hartlib and Comenius were refugees from the Thirty Years' War and relocated to London where they worked with Dury to establish a centre of learning. They were convinced that advancements in human knowledge, along with societal reform and improvement, prepared for the arrival of the millennium. Thus, they devoted themselves to numerous projects to advance education, commerce, social welfare and various fields of science. Likewise they created an extensive network of early modern intellectuals who hoped that their work of universal reform would reverse the effects of the Fall and prepare the world for the return of Christ.

For Dury and Hartlib, universal reform was not the only project influenced by millenarianism. As eye-witnesses to the devastation of the

Thirty Years' War and the fracturing of Protestant nations and churches on the continent, Dury and Hartlib set out to promote the reunification of various branches of Protestantism. Some historians contend that Dury and Hartlib's efforts were primarily politically motivated as an attempt to unify confessional Lutherans and Calvinists against Roman Catholic aggression.³⁵ But Dury and Hartlib continued to work for unification even after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.³⁶ They were convinced that their irenic labours contributed to something greater. In their correspondence with Mede, Dury and Hartlib enquired about his millenarian interpretations. They adopted Mede's conclusions and placed their efforts in a broader apocalyptic drama. The millennium was their hope for true unification and peace, along with complete universal reform. Ultimately Dury and Hartlib believed that their work would help to usher in the return of Christ and the arrival of the millennial kingdom.³⁷ It is significant to note that Dury and Hartlib's desires for universal reform and Protestant unification were not specifically Puritan objectives, although both men solicited the support of individual Puritans and they were sympathetic to many Puritan concerns. The influence of millenarianism on Dury and Hartlib's projects once again demonstrates an important distinction: seventeenth-century millenarianism, although compatible with Puritanism, was not uniquely Puritan.

THE LEGACY OF MILLENARIANISM IN OLD AND NEW ENGLAND

The Restoration of Charles II to the throne ended the Puritan hegemony in England. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 resulted in the expulsion of over a thousand Puritan ministers from their pulpits. With the end of political troubles in England, previous historians have assumed that millenarian interest diminished as well.³⁸ But millenarianism continued into the 1660s without the violent context of the previous decades. Dissenting Puritans, like Thomas Goodwin and John Bunyan, were careful to distance themselves from the 1661 Fifth Monarchists' uprising, but they continued to hope for the future arrival of the millennium. Even Richard Baxter, although he was not a millenarian, engaged in apocalyptic debates with a disciple of Mede, Thomas Beverley, in 1690–1.³⁹

Besides the Dissenting Puritans, others within the re-established Church of England continued the millenarian tradition. This trajectory of millenarianism was not Puritan, but more closely resembled the attitude and theological positions of Joseph Mede. These non-Puritan

millenarians continued to be influenced by anti-Catholic sentiments, given extreme suspicions of a papist plot to assassinate Charles II and replace him with his Catholic brother James.⁴⁰ Henry More, Mede's student and later successor at Christ's College, published numerous millenarian studies investigating biblical prophecies from Daniel and Revelation. More wrote against the Dutch intellectual Hugo Grotius (who denied that the pope was the Antichrist) and Richard Baxter, and his conclusions depended heavily on his teacher's foundational interpretations, especially Mede's synchronisms.⁴¹

Similarly Drue Cressner, who studied at Christ's College under More, was also profoundly influenced by Mede. However, Cressner who was also strongly anti-Catholic, believed that Mede's original interpretations required some revision in order to address his present political climate. Cressner was impressed by the writings of the French millenarian Pierre Jurieu. In 1686 Jurieu published a monograph arguing that the vision of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 was clearly fulfilled in 1685. He identified the slaying of the Two Witnesses with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In Revelation 11 the slaying of the Two Witnesses is followed by their resurrection, and Cressner looked eagerly for a sign of their resurrection. He found it in the ascension of William and Mary to the English throne and the Glorious Revolution.⁴²

Beyond the British Isles the legacy of millenarianism can be traced to Puritans in North America as well. Beginning with Perry Miller's original study of the first migration, much has been written about the Puritan 'errand into the wilderness' and its millenarian significance.⁴³ Miller focused on the colonial Puritans' use of Old Testament Israel (specifically as a nation in covenant with God) as a biblical typology now applied to these early New Englanders. As Israel travelled from bondage in Egypt, through the wilderness, and finally arrived at the Promised Land, so these early Puritans followed the same paradigm on their trek to the Promised Land of North America. Subsequent literary scholars, building on Miller's work, argued that millenarianism was a central motivating factor for moving from the Old World to the New.⁴⁴ Illustrated initially by John Winthrop's famous declaration that the colonies would be a 'city upon a hill' for the rest of the world to see and admire, these early studies concluded that some millenarian Puritans assumed for themselves the status of New Israel, with all accompanying covenantal promises. In essence, New England replaced Israel as the people of God. Thus, they abandoned England and its acquiescence to the Antichrist and set off to erect the millennial kingdom in North America, literally their Promised Land.

More recently, this historiographical narrative has been challenged by Theodore Bozeman and Reiner Smolinski. Bozeman and Smolinski do not dispute the assessment that the majority of early New England divines, including John Cotton, John Eliot, Peter Bulkeley and Increase Mather were millenarians. However, Bozeman argues that the motivation for migration was found in more immediate events, especially the desire for a place of refuge and freedom from persecution for nonconformity.⁴⁵ Many of these colonial Puritans first relocated to the Dutch Republic, but political and theological troubles in the Netherlands caused the refugees to look for a safer haven. For these Puritans, New England was viewed as the next option for a place of refuge. Smolinski claims that these earlier studies divorced language from doctrine, and he offers a more careful examination of the nature of New England Puritan millenarianism. He concludes that the distinct millenarian doctrines held and defended by the early New Englanders could not logically be the motivation for their migration.⁴⁶ Smolinski points to a revealing exchange of letters between William Twisse and Joseph Mede in 1634. After receiving news about the colonies, Twisse was so impressed with their progress that he wrote to Mede to suggest that the colonies would be the location of the New Jerusalem. Mede responded by dismissing Twisse's suggestion in the most startling way. Mede reasoned that North America, without the gospel, was the place where the Devil fled when he lost his authority in Europe. Consequently, North America was a pagan land and even the mild success of some of the missionary efforts would not change this reality. For Mede, the New Jerusalem would be established in Judea with its boundaries restricted to the Old World; and North America would not participate in the millennial blessings at all.⁴⁷ Instead Mede suggested that the forces of Satan depicted as Gog and Magog in the prophecies of Ezekiel 38:1, 2 and Revelation 20:7, 8 would emerge from North America.⁴⁸ Mede, the millenarian mentor to the Puritans, essentially condemned all those who migrated to the domain of Satan and excluded them from the kingdom of Christ.

So devastating was Mede's interpretation that successive generations of New Englanders, including Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, were compelled to respond and defend their residence in North America. But these New Englanders did not respond by claiming that Mede was wrong, and that the millennial kingdom would be located exclusively in North America, as the followers of Perry Miller concluded. Instead the New England Puritans agreed with Mede's location of the New Jerusalem in the Old World, but Peter Bulkeley,

John Eliot, Nicholas Noyes and Cotton Mather argued that the boundaries of the millennial kingdom would extend so far as to include them in the New World.⁴⁹ Thus, their migration was not an abandonment of the Old World for millennial blessings in the New World, because their eschatology maintained the central importance of Europe and their secondary role in North America.

Moreover, the colonial Puritans' use of Old Testament typology did not confuse the covenantal position of Israel with New England. As noted earlier, one characteristic of millenarianism was an anticipation of the national conversion of ethnic Jews signalling the arrival of the millennium. The classic biblical proof-text for this doctrine was Romans 11. But in addition to this New Testament text, millenarians reasoned that this conversion would be the fulfilment of God's covenantal promises made to Israel initially in the Old Testament. First-generation New Englanders, like Thomas Hooker and Peter Bulkeley, agreed with this doctrine. Additionally, Increase Mather was the most explicit in his reliance on his millenarian predecessors Joseph Mede, William Twisse and Thomas Goodwin, because he agreed with them that the conversion of Israel as a nation would be a supernatural apocalyptic event.⁵⁰ If New Englanders still maintained a place for ethnic Israel in the redemptive plan of God according to his covenantal promises, then it is difficult to assert that the New Englanders viewed themselves as replacing Israel and consequently as the heirs to all the former covenantal promises.

What earlier studies of New England millenarianism lack is a theological sensitivity to Puritan Old Testament hermeneutics. Following the tradition from John Calvin and William Perkins, seventeenth-century Puritans understood the relation between the Old Testament typology of Israel and the New Testament church as defined by the divine plan of redemption. The history of Israel was an analogy of God's plan of salvation for the church. The literal or physical promises of God to Israel foreshadowed the spiritual promises given through Christ to the church. Mary Morrissey's study of the Paul's Cross Jeremiads describes the use of Israel in these sermons as an example for the church, a form of comparison, which did not confuse the literal with the spiritual in the use of Old Testament typology.⁵¹ In the same way the New England Puritans understood this crucial distinction in their use of typological Israel as an example for spiritual guidance.

While millenarianism was not the motive for the original migration to the colonies, it still played a role in the theological dialogue and construction of the New Englanders. In particular, the establishment of

the Congregational Way by Cotton, Bulkeley, Hooker and John Davenport was linked to their millenarianism. For these Puritan ministers, the purity of the church should be sought through discipline, doctrine and polity, which would be accomplished by admitting those to church membership who in fact were truly regenerate. Cotton and others applied admission tests to determine if an individual was indeed regenerate. Likewise Cotton's millenarianism, following Mede and Alsted, anticipated a purging where the unregenerate would be excluded from the blessings of the millennium. Cotton interpreted the 'First Resurrection' in Revelation 20 as an individual resurrection and a corporate resurrection of particular churches. Thus, by attempting to ensure that all within his congregation were regenerate, Cotton and other New England ministers hoped with greater confidence for their churches' presence in the millennium.⁵²

The legacy of millenarianism can be seen in another aspect of New England Puritanism. John Eliot arrived in Boston in 1633 and established missionary work in Roxbury to convert Native American Indians. He translated and published a Bible in the Algonquian language, along with Indian grammars to assist his missionary work.⁵³ Eliot speculated that the Native Americans might be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, and their conversion would participate in the anticipated national conversion.⁵⁴ His fervour for millenarianism grew after the execution of Charles I and the ascendancy of Cromwell during the Interregnum. He wrote a treatise describing how the millennial kingdom of Christ would be governed and how Christ was the only heir to the crown of England; but he was later forced to retract this after the restoration of the monarchy.⁵⁵ Indeed, just as it was in old England, the legacy of millenarianism was clearly significant for Puritans in New England.

To conclude, within the history of Puritanism, millenarianism featured as a vibrant eschatological tradition, which attracted many Puritans (especially Independents). While not all Puritans were millenarians, the rebirth of this doctrine complemented a number of Puritan concerns. Seventeenth-century millenarianism was intellectually rigorous and adaptable to various situations and contexts. And this ability to adapt resulted in a broader impact beyond the Puritans. Nevertheless, the rebirth of millenarianism was shaped by both the scholarly investigation of the Bible and the volatile environment of the early seventeenth century. This doctrine had an impact on everything from politics in parliament to ecclesiastical discussions at the local level. Furthermore, interest in millenarianism was sustained beyond the

tumultuous years of the Civil War and across the Atlantic in the colonies. It is significant that the imagination of many Puritans was captured by the hope of the millennium.

Notes

1. 'Dr Twisse's First Letter to Mr. Mede', in Joseph Mede, *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede, B.D., sometime Fellow of Christ's Colledge in Cambridge*, 3rd edn (London, 1677), p. 758.
2. H. Hotson, 'The historiographical origins of Calvinist millenarianism', in B. Gordon, ed., *Protestant History and Identity in the Sixteenth-Century Europe*, 2 vols. (Aldershot, 1996), II. 159.
3. See W. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603–60* (London, 1969); B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972); C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1972); P. Christianson, *Reformers in Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978); K. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979).
4. N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987); and J. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993).
5. K. Fincham, ed., *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642* (London, 1993); M. Todd, ed., *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (London, 1995).
6. A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 1995); C. Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology 1550–1682* (Dublin, 2000); J. K. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586–1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2006).
7. See N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford, 1957); S. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York, 1970). The work of William Lamont and Bernard Capp applied this historiography to seventeenth-century Britain. See note. 3.
8. See Augustine, *City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson (Harmondsworth, 1972).
9. See M. Vial, 'Luther et l'Apocalypse d'après les Préface de 1522 et 1530', *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 131 (1999), 25–37.
10. H. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New York, 1989), pp. 64–74.
11. Heinrich Bullinger, *A Hundred Sermons upon the Apocalips of Jesus Christe* (London, 1561), preface. These sermons were first published in Latin in 1557. Also see I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 102–12.
12. Hotson, 'The historiographical origins', pp. 164–6.

13. Both books were later translated into English and published as: Johann Heinrich Alsted, *The Beloved City* (London, 1643); Joseph Mede, *The Key to the Revelation* (London, 1643).
14. For more details on Alsted see H. Hotson, *Paradise Postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2000).
15. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth*, pp. 100–7.
16. *Ibid.*, 21–5.
17. Northants Record Office, Isham Correspondence MS 221; cited in A. Milton, 'The Laudians and the Church of Rome c. 1625–1640' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989), p. 29.
18. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 120.
19. Mede, *Works*, p. 818.
20. Joseph Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times* (London, 1641).
21. See J. F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars 1640–1648* (Princeton, NJ, 1969), pp. 201–7 and B. Capp, 'The political dimension of apocalyptic thought', in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds., *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 109–10.
22. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 6th edn (Glasgow, 1990), p. 11.
23. *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, ed. D. Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1841–2), II, 313.
24. Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, pp. 127–48. For a literary analysis of Milton's eschatology see: D. Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2001).
25. Thomas Hayne, *Christ's Kingdome on Earth* (London, 1645), p. i.
26. Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, pp. 54–5.
27. J. Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 238–89.
28. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth*, p. 226.
29. John Owen, 'The shaking and translating of heaven and earth', in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh, 1850–3), VIII, 243–79.
30. S. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Marking of English Foreign Policy, 1650–68* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 11–100.
31. See A. Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford, 1982).
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33. See D. S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982).
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16 The godly and popular culture

ALEXANDRA WALSHAM

The task of delineating the relationship between Puritanism and popular culture may be compared with walking into a minefield that contains not merely hidden explosive devices but also treacherous pockets of quicksand. The hapless scholar is simultaneously confronted by two conceptual and definitional hazards. Both the subjects of enquiry are slippery, contentious and intractable; both have been the focus of prolonged and inconclusive debates about their nature, shape and usefulness as analytical tools; both are capable of being dismissed as no more than optical illusions.

As discussed elsewhere in this volume, historians have spilt considerable quantities of ink attempting to capture the essence and significance of 'Puritanism'. Likened to a 'protean beast' and 'dragon lurking in the path of every student of the period', to some the term has seemed 'an admirable refuge from clarity of thought' that should be banished permanently from academic discourse.¹ Others uphold its value as a way of characterising the distinctive style of piety practised by a zealous subset of Protestants in the English-speaking world – an affective, evangelical piety rooted in an experimental application of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and revolving around preaching, prayer and pious reading of the Bible and other godly books. Sometimes combined with a determination to work for further reform of the structures of ecclesiastical government and with discontent about the 'popish' liturgical and ceremonial residues that remained within the church, it characteristically involved strenuous commitment to upholding a strict moral code. But it was an outlook marked above all by the self-perception of being a godly remnant, a beleaguered and persecuted minority surrounded by a sea of hostile reprobates. In this sense, as Patrick Collinson has stressed, Puritanism was 'not a thing definable in itself but only one half of a stressful relationship', a fluid, dynamic and unstable relationship that depended on context and situation.²

Since its rediscovery by pioneering social historians in the 1970s, the concept of 'popular culture' has proved no less problematical. While the utility of an expansive, anthropological definition of 'culture' as a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values and the symbolic forms in which they are expressed and embodied is widely accepted, both the identity of the 'people' whose collective mentality is the object of pursuit and the possibility of studying this 'elusive quarry' remain topics of ongoing discussion and dispute. Theorists have questioned the dichotomy between the learned elite and illiterate multitude upon which early studies of 'popular culture' tended to rest, highlighting the diversity and plurality of the various subcultures which fractured and comprised it. Comparing endeavours to describe it with attempting to catch a cloud in a butterfly net, they have also emphasised the limitations of the available evidence, suggesting sceptically that such sources may ultimately tell us more about the lenses through which 'popular culture' was viewed than about that nebulous entity itself. Critical of approaches that treat it as a kind of 'cultural fossil' or 'reified object', the most advanced work has taught us to think instead in terms of process, appropriation and use. Reconceptualised in this way, the challenge historians confront in trying to access and pinpoint 'popular culture' has become yet more acute.³

In negotiating this double set of obstacles and pitfalls, the historian may perhaps take some comfort from the fact that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these concepts were dialectically linked. The very identity of those labelled with the nickname 'Puritan' stemmed from their disapproval of the lukewarm religion and profane lifestyle of the unregenerate and 'carnal' majority. It depended on a deliberate dissociation from the 'popish' and 'atheistical' piety of the rest of society, on a self-imposed apartheid from the corrupt and sinful people whom they were at the same time intent upon spiritually converting and morally transforming. 'True professors' constructed themselves in opposition to the cultural and moral values of such incorrigible 'worldlings', contrasting the 'sweet joys' of their own 'gracious exercises' with what the Northamptonshire divine Robert Bolton called 'the frothy pleasures of good-fellowship'.⁴ The division between elect and reprobate that lay at the heart of this outlook was in essence eschatological, but it cannot be denied that it sometimes acquired a social inflection; nor that by fostering attention to the beliefs and customs of the 'ungodly' multitude it helped to forge the notion of 'popular culture' itself.

On the other side of the equation, resentment of the ostentatious religiosity and officious interference of the self-styled 'saints' into the

private lives of their neighbours played an equally important part in shaping, if not inventing, the phenomenon of 'Puritanism'. It not only engendered the odious label 'Puritan' but gave rise to memorable literary characters and theatrical stereotypes like Shakespeare's Malvolio and Ben Jonson's Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, whose hallmark was a fiery, intemperate zeal against 'popular' recreations and pastimes.⁵ In turn it also served to create a common bond of affinity and consciousness between those who were satirised and maligned.

Acquiring much of their substance and meaning from their confrontation with each other, 'Puritanism' and 'popular culture' must therefore be seen as an example of reciprocal and mutually reinforcing processes of cultural and religious self-fashioning. They comprise one episode in a perennial struggle within Christian history between indifference and zeal, relaxed custom and moral rectitude, between a culture of licence and laughter and a culture of restraint and austerity. The visible traces this conflict has left in the documentary record have greatly coloured, not to say distorted our understanding of the impact of fervent Protestantism and, indeed, of the Reformation in general. Adopting a deliberately flexible definition of both concepts, the rest of this chapter seeks to highlight complexities that belie the settled commonplace that the two were locked in perpetual combat.

THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS

We may begin our survey by briefly exploring the movement known as the reformation of manners. The pronounced spasms of moral activism which marked the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had many targets and took a variety of forms. Sustained efforts to contain sexual promiscuity and to eradicate drunkenness and swearing accompanied a determined crusade against May games, midsummer bonfires, wakes, ales, plays, dancing, rush-bearing and other popular sports and seasonal festivities. The subject of repeated presentment and penitential censure in the English church courts and the Scottish kirk sessions, such activities also came under the hostile scrutiny of village officials, regional justices of the peace and civic corporations, who drew up severe codes to reform and repress them. Denounced in dozens of sermons, these social 'abuses' and 'vices' were castigated and anatomised in a prolific polemical literature of complaint that flowed from the pens of concerned clergy and laity alike. The writers of such works typically conceptualised their task in terms of a battle between 'custom' and 'verity', tradition and truth. They argued that such 'popish',

'heathenish' and 'wicked exercises' profaned the Sabbath, infringed the laws laid down in scripture, and aroused the wrath of the Almighty, as well as provoking further sin, disorder, violence and idleness. Such themes would be echoed resoundingly in the pronouncements of the later seventeenth-century voluntary Societies for the Reformation of Manners.

While recognising that the early modern period coincided with a particular outburst of moral intolerance, historians have been divided about both the role evangelical Protestantism played in initiating and fuelling this process and the social profile of those who fell victim to it. In their influential study of the Essex village of Terling, Keith Wrightson and David Levine posited a precise link between the rise of Puritanism and intense efforts to redraw the boundaries of permitted behaviour, assembling evidence to suggest that godly constables and churchwardens of the 'middling sort' combined to launch a campaign to police and discipline the conduct of poor parishioners. William Hunt has seen the same close alliance between ministers and the 'chief inhabitants' of the parish operating to foster similar tendencies across that county as a whole. But the claim that a potent fusion between Protestant ideals and essentially 'secular' anxieties about the adverse local consequences of population growth, inflation and poverty lay behind this drive for social control has been vigorously contested on a number of fronts. Margaret Spufford and Marjorie McIntosh have pointed to similar spurts of regulatory activity in earlier eras that experienced demographic and economic pressure, notably the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Such precedents have led the former to insist that in explaining developments two hundred years later religious belief is nothing more than 'a gigantic red herring'.⁶

Other scholars have disputed the suggestion that Puritanism was the accomplice and agent of social differentiation, an ideology that appealed particularly to the interests and priorities of the literate, prosperous and industrious sorts of people and that tacitly facilitated the emergence of capitalism. Resisting sub-Marxist models that fail to do justice to the subtleties of social interaction at the grassroots, they have contended that the reformation of manners was emphatically not the façade for a form of class repression and reminded us that its casualties were not confined to the lower orders. The moral campaigns of local reformers created frictions and tensions *within* as much as, if not more than, *between* social ranks and degrees – setting the follies of youth against the wisdom of age and dividing early modern communities in complex and contradictory ways. As the ecclesiastical and political controversies

surrounding the promulgation of the royal Book of Sports in 1617 and 1633 reveal, nostalgic defence of the traditional culture of communal merrymaking and mirth was by no means limited to the ignorant and uneducated: Laudian clerics and neo-classicising poets like Michael Drayton and Robert Herrick vigorously championed 'honest', 'harmless' and 'lawful' Sunday pastimes. Nor can we conclude that the most ferocious opponents of the culture of the alehouse, bowling alley and maypole excluded men and women of humble status. Like the London woodturner Nehemiah Wallington, they too played their part in protesting against and repudiating King Charles I's hated 'book of liberty'. They too took the momentous decision to leave England for the wilderness of America and participated in the 'street wars of religion' that culminated in and contributed to the military showdown between parliament and the king in the 1640s.⁷ It is misguided to suppose that godly Protestantism struck a chord solely among those who occupied the upper and middle ladders of the social hierarchy; it frequently cut across the boundary between wealth and penury and won adherents from all sectors of early modern society.

At the same time, too much attention to the clashes and confrontations these initiatives precipitated in England, Scotland and Wales may blind us to areas of overlap between the moral preoccupations of Puritans and the wider populace. That the concerns about marriage and sexuality that animated the reformers could have resonance beyond the circles of the 'godly' is suggested by the humiliating quasi-judicial ritual of the skimmington or charivari to which adulterers and other miscreants who had infringed local taboos were often subject in this period. The relative tolerance of the authorities towards the practice of banging pots and pans, displaying cuckold's horns and parading offenders backwards on horses through towns and villages also underlines the potential for partial and temporary convergences of priority to emerge.⁸ As Martin Ingram has stressed, moreover, the operation of ecclesiastical justice depended upon cooperation and reflected a measure of social consensus: it relied upon the willingness of individuals to participate in the task of overseeing the morals of their fellow parishioners. Without this and without a degree of tactical flexibility on the part of Protestant authorities, Margo Todd has recently asserted, the Calvinist Reformation in Scotland could simply not have succeeded. Excessive emphasis on the long lists of infractions which the courts and kirk sessions clocked up in conducting their business may obscure the real extent of their achievement. The scale of resistance to the crusade against Christmas, cockfighting, theatrical entertainment and other leisure

activities which reached its peak during the 'godly rule' of parliament and Oliver Cromwell was certainly significant. Yet there remains a danger of overstating the failure of this energetic attempt to bring about a sweeping moral and cultural revolution. We must not rule out the possibility that a desire to stamp out vice and sin and to restrain raucous and unruly behaviour itself constituted one strand in the highly variegated fabric that was popular culture.

All this is not to endorse the suggestion that Puritanism has little or no relevance to explaining why the period witnessed an upsurge in disciplinary activity. The fervour of the saints did not provide the only impetus for these campaigns, but this cannot disguise the fact that they were often at the leading edge of such initiatives and that their endeavours had a distinctive cast and flavour. Where the zeal of magistrates and ministers converged, individual towns and cities like Dorchester could be transformed, at least outwardly, into new Jerusalems – emblems and beacons of godly order and piety which sealed their covenant with God. Puritans had no monopoly on respect for the Lord's Day but at the same time it is a mistake to ignore the differences between medieval and mainstream sabbatarianism and the more rigorous and far-reaching doctrine of the Sabbath that emerged in the work of Nicholas Bownd and other divines in the 1590s. Nor can we afford to overlook the peculiar strength of their conviction that it was the duty of the elect to act as their brothers' keepers, to work towards the realisation of the Lord's kingdom on earth and to protect the nation at large from the divine plagues and judgements that would as surely befall it as they had ancient Israel. Such assumptions undoubtedly invested their moral activism with greater intensity and urgency.

PROVIDENTIALISM, ANTI-POPERY AND PRESBYTERIANISM

Nevertheless, it remains important to emphasise that there were points of intersection and contact between the culture of Puritanism and the culture of the multitude against whom they instinctively defined themselves. By no means all aspects of Puritan mentality conflicted with the rhythms of what we may call traditional religion. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of providentialism. Belief in the interventions of providence in the lives of the elect lay at the heart of Puritan piety. Oscillating between anxiety and arrogance, the godly incessantly scrutinised events for signs of divine favour and disapprobation, keys to unravelling the mystery of predestination. Minor

mishaps, domestic irritations and medical ailments were all analysed with the aim of unlocking the secrets of one's spiritual fate in the afterlife and gaining assurance that one numbered among the heirs of salvation. The godly detected the finger of the Almighty in the quotidian and dramatic alike, from the fall of a sparrow or leaf to the most devastating earthquake, fire or flood. They saw the world, to use the words of the Huntingdon schoolmaster Thomas Beard, as 'the theatre of God's judgements' and solemnly recorded the retributive punishments that overtook their unregenerate neighbours. The voluminous notebooks compiled by Nehemiah Wallington, for instance, include more than one 'memorial' of the terrible divine penalties inflicted upon Sabbath-breakers, drunkards and other 'vile livers'.⁹

This mentality was by no means incompatible with a cluster of longstanding beliefs about the supernatural inherited from the medieval past. Indeed, sometimes Puritans themselves could veer dangerously close to ways of thinking that Reformed theologians regarded as 'superstitious' and 'magical': thus the Hertfordshire tailor John Dane who later emigrated to Ipswich, Massachusetts, was deterred from a night of dancing by a rumble of thunder overhead and persuaded to attend church diligently on Sundays by the bite of a hornet which caused his finger to swell up.¹⁰ He used providence and nature as an oracular guide to his actions in a manner that reminds us that lay providentialism was not a passive clone of that prescribed and practised by learned divines.

Deeply embedded in pre-Reformation religious culture, a propensity to see the hand of God in accidents and catastrophes and to interpret oddities and aberrations in nature as omens and prodigies was also widely diffused in post-Reformation British society, as it would be in early New England. Lacking the eschatological framework within which the godly assessed such phenomena, popular fascination with sudden deaths, monstrous births, spectral apparitions, comets, and other botanical, zoological and geological wonders was not identical to Puritan providentialism. But there was still significant scope for synergies between the two. Spread by both preachers and pamphleteers, disseminated in sermons and sensational cheap print, stories of the 'strange but true' point to interconnections between the outlook of experimental Calvinists and those they too often disparaged as 'cold statute Protestants', if not incorrigible 'papists'.

The same set of assumptions comprised a critical ingredient in Protestant patriotism. A propensity to interpret fortuitous events as signal 'blessings' and 'miracles' bestowed by God on a chosen nation

came to be shared by individuals from all parts of the religious spectrum. The notion that the Reformation itself was a divine deliverance whereby the English people had been released from popish darkness, ignorance and thralldom and brought into the glorious light and knowledge of the gospel had its taproot in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, which also did much to stimulate an enduring appetite for tales of the heroic sacrifices made by the Marian Protestant martyrs. This mythology was extended and augmented by the similarly inspiring legends that grew up around the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. The anniversaries of the latter on 5 November and of Elizabeth I's accession on the 17th of that month became new Protestant holy days. Initially stimulated and orchestrated by the authorities, as David Cressy and Ronald Hutton have demonstrated, they rapidly evolved into genuinely popular celebrations involving bonfires, bells, processions and fireworks. In Scotland, the streets of Edinburgh likewise annually smoked with 'thankful fires' on 5 August in commemoration of James I's escape from the Gowrie conspiracy and the return of Charles I from Madrid without a Spanish Catholic bride in 1623 led to triumphant public rejoicing on both sides of the border. Helping to compensate for the festivals excised out of the ecclesiastical calendar in the 1530s, 40s and 50s, these occasions served to align the self-styled saints temporarily with the rest of Protestant society. Together with civic entertainments of a militant Christian character, they provided a partial, Reformed substitute for the 'impious' pastimes which towns like Chester, Coventry and Norwich were simultaneously seeking to eliminate.

The hatred of popery that fused with providentialism in these situations was not, of course, homogeneous or univocal. Imbued with apocalyptic convictions about the activities of the Antichrist, Puritan anti-Catholicism did have a particularly hard edge and as the period progressed it was a discourse that became increasingly divisive. Employed to express unease about the rise of Arminianism and to castigate the policies of the Caroline regime, in the 1620s and 30s it opened faultlines and fractures in English society – faultlines and fractures that cut across the gulf between the 'godly' and the 'multitude'. Times of fear and crisis could in fact provide the hotter sort of Protestants with the opportunity to mobilise bodies of opinion far broader than those that can legitimately be labelled Puritan. One such precarious alliance occurred in the wake of the Blackfriars accident in October 1623, when an attic in which a Jesuit was delivering an evensong sermon collapsed, killing nearly 100 Catholics: while preachers declared the calamity an act

of divine vengeance, apparently intent upon purging the capital of papists, some members of the crowd who witnessed the tragedy committed physical outrages against the survivors.¹¹

Especially during the heady days of the early 1640s, it is possible to identify other such junctures. John Walter has interpreted the activities of the Colchester plunderers who attacked the possessions and persons of local recusants and of soldiers who engaged in iconoclastic attacks on altar rails, prayer books, surplices, stained-glass windows and images in similar terms, highlighting the confessional dimension to their violence and vandalism. No less than godly gentlemen like Sir Robert Harley and Sir Henry Sherfield who destroyed popish pictures and crucifixes, these individuals were driven by convictions about the necessity of removing the sources of wrath-provoking idolatry within their midst. These and other episodes suggest that the Puritan agenda for ecclesiastical and liturgical reform could coalesce with the concerns of at least a proportion of the common people, based on a shared antipathy towards popery, prelacy and royal misrule. They justify speaking of popular parliamentarianism as a genuine force to be reckoned with.

Such incidents may also prompt us to reconsider the populist appeal of earlier manifestations of the presbyterian movement. Historians of both England and Scotland may have paid too little attention to the capacity of the programme to abolish the hierarchy of bishops to recruit or attract wide support. As recent work by Peter Kaufman has revealed, there was a moment when reformers favoured the establishment of broadly participatory parish regimes and believed that the humble laity could be trusted to play an active part in local ecclesiastical government. Peaking in the 1570s, optimism about the empowerment of the 'common man' receded in the following decades, giving way to growing clerical suspicion and conservatism. The exploits of the Northamptonshire maltster and self-styled messiah William Hacket and his disciples in 1591 may have been extreme and unrepresentative, but they indicate that there remained a constituency committed to realising the comprehensive restructuring of the Church of England for which Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers called, within which some were even prepared to contemplate radical acts of political terrorism.¹² The shadowy history of early seventeenth-century sectarianism, which is currently in the process of being re-written, suggests that the continuing pull and reach of presbyterian and proto-congregational ideas after 1600 should not be underestimated: these were ecclesiological positions that were adopted by more than a tiny, insignificant and socially skewed minority. Meanwhile, the rapid spread of new evangelical Protestant

groups in the wake of the Civil War ought to remind us that Puritan zeal in its broader sense was often hard to resist.

Just as it is vital to try to recapture some of the infectious excitement of the era of the 'Puritan Revolution', so too might we need to reassess the impact of the early Reformation itself. A generation of revisionism which has dwelt heavily on active and passive resistance to the break with the Catholic past and cast doubt on the ability of Calvinist theology to grasp the hearts and minds of the populace at large is gradually giving way to a recognition that in the end Protestantism proved a 'runaway success'.¹³ Pessimism about the intelligibility of the predestinarian precepts that shaped godly piety and the appeal of a culture of sermons and Bible-reading must be tempered by the evidence of those who enthusiastically embraced it and believed that they had been born again in Christ.

PREACHING, FASTING, PSALM-SINGING AND GODLY READING

With this in mind, it is time to re-examine the core characteristics of godly life, the 'voluntary religion' which marked out Puritans in their own eyes from the lukewarm masses that surrounded them.

We may turn first to preaching, the central organ of Puritan conversion. Too often seen as a mere instrument for indoctrination, it is important to emphasise that listening to sermons could be an addictive and enthralling experience. 'Oh what a heaven is it, to enjoy powerful, savory, preaching', remarked the Essex divine Samuel Rogers in 1636, giving voice to a heartfelt sentiment shared by many Puritan laypeople.¹⁴ Talented preachers did not simply instruct their hearers in the lessons embedded in scripture, they threw all their energies into rousing them to a pitch of emotional fervour. Sermons were a kind of performance art, the printed versions of which are a very poor guide to the theatrical manner in which some godly ministers conducted themselves in their pulpits. The most charismatic and accomplished tailored their discourses to their audiences: Stephen Marshall, who delivered his inflammatory sermon *Meroz Cursed* no less than sixty times in the early 1640s, was said to have employed 'vulgar proverbs and odd country phrases and by-words, which . . . captivated the people at a strange rate'.¹⁵ Others moved their listeners to tears: when John Rogers impersonated God threatening to take the Bible away from the English people in Dedham in the 1620s, members of the congregation wept so uncontrollably that one young admirer was 'fain to hang a quarter of an

hour on the neck of his horse before he had power to mount'.¹⁶ Anticipating the tactics of later revivalist preachers, some became nothing less than cult figures and folk heroes. In early modern Scotland, Andrew Gray of Glasgow was so 'exceedingly followed' that on certain Sundays people were brought out sick and fainting from the crowd that thronged to hear him, while those who took notes as he spoke subsequently preserved them as 'a precious relict' of this holy man of God.¹⁷ It is quite wrong to suppose that such sermons were inaccessible to all but the learned and literate.

Such examples assist in explaining why many people travelled miles across the countryside to satisfy their thirst for inspiring preaching. 'Gadding' across parish boundaries was itself a form of godly sociability, in the course of which people forged corporate bonds with other 'friends in the Lord'. At Calk in Derbyshire, men and women came with packed lunches to listen to Julines Herring, returning home in the evening 'in companies'.¹⁸ John Earle's witty character of the 'she-Puritan' or 'she-precise hypocrite' neatly captures the recreational element of this practice: 'her ofttest gossipings are Sabbath-days journeys'.¹⁹ Curiously replicating the underlying patterns of medieval pilgrimage, sermon-gadding also bore more than a passing resemblance to the weekly jaunts made by the young to dances, football matches and other sports. Both were instrumental in creating what anthropologists call '*communitas*'.

Puritan fast days were an even more effective means of uniting the scattered remnant of the faithful. People flocked to these marathon sessions of preaching involving teams of ministers, which frequently culminated, much like the traditional church ale, in a common meal and a collection for charity. From the outside looking in, the zeal of the men, women and children, 'labourers, workmen and simpletons' who flocked 'from all quarters' to be present at these exercises was nothing less than bewildering.²⁰ In Scotland, where rousing sermons were often linked with mass open-air communions, these sacramental occasions had a distinctly festive and convivial flavour. At the kirk of Shotts in 1630, the words of John Livingstone wrought such an 'unusual motion' in his audience that some passed out and laid on the ground 'as if they had been dead'. A stimulus to ecstatic displays of spiritual awakening, they also provided an excuse for religious and secular merry-making: as the leading historian of these 'holy fairs' and their revivalist counterparts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America remarks, 'the sacred and the social were inextricably combined at these events'.²¹

Nor should we ignore the opportunities for mutual affirmation and support supplied by meetings to pray, discuss scripture and repeat

sermons in private households. Sometimes the prelude to formal separation from the church into conventicles, these gatherings too were moments when piety and the pleasures of fellowship commingled. The power and popularity of psalm-singing also deserves more than passing notice. Once described as 'the secret weapon of the Reformation', the capacity of congregational singing to delight and inflame the heart cannot be discounted.²² A common accompaniment to fasts and journeys to Sunday and weekday sermons, it too fostered identity and solidarity in ways that had the potential to draw people magnetically into the select band of saints.

Too often seen as the epitome of an introspective and intellectually demanding religion that repelled those who were unable to read, the Puritan appetite for edifying books describing the 'pathway to heaven' and the 'practice of piety' is now beginning to be viewed in a fresh light. In an era in which vicarious literacy and reading aloud were commonplace, it should not be automatically assumed that this was a world closed to the uneducated. Shared reading of the Bible and other devotional works was the very cement of the godly family, while the diaries and autobiographies Puritans compiled were themselves 'sites of conversation', the scribal publication of which fostered ties and provided the food of spiritual comfort to individuals beyond the household.²³

Approaching the problem from a different perspective and adopting a more optimistic assessment of the spread of popular literacy, it is also important to underline how far Puritanism succeeded in penetrating the market for cheap print. The 'godly ballads' produced by the early reformers long remained in the stock of competitive trade publishers, and ingenious preachers of the next generation hijacked the genre of the salacious murder and prodigy pamphlet to press home the lessons of the Protestant theology of providence and predestination in a way that suggests the alleged retreat of the English Protestant ministry from popular media after 1580 may have been overstated. In Massachusetts, similar efforts to transform the almanac into a vehicle for piety were at least partially successful. The presence of 'affectionate' Puritan writings in the Restoration marketplace attests to a fresh attempt by ejected nonconformist clerics to harness the chapbook as a tool to convert the common people, while the longevity of John Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress* is further evidence that the hotter sort of Protestantism could find a broad audience. Sometimes priced at no more than a few pence, sermons themselves could be bestsellers. So too could polemical tracts that castigated sin and demanded the reform of morals

and manners like Philip Stubbes's *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), the work of a semi-professional writer whose career illustrates the blurred interface between godliness and Grub Street.²⁴

THE COHABITATION OF THE FAITHFUL
WITH THE UNFAITHFUL

The preceding sections have served to unsettle some ingrained assumptions about the incompatibility between Puritanism and various accepted renderings of the term 'popular culture', and to show that they interacted in more nuanced and complex ways than has often been allowed.

This is borne out by the example of the Presbyterian apprentice Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, whose diary compiled between 1663 and 1674 offers rare insight into the intersection between the culture of the alehouse and the culture of sermon-gadding and the godly conventicle. Lowe moved easily between these two spheres, joining his friends at the tavern, bowling alley and races, but also diligently attending lectures and household exercises, singing psalms in his shop by candlelight and regularly retreating to a ditch in a local heath for private prayer with the Almighty. This is not to say that Lowe felt no tension in cohabiting both worlds: he often lamented his weakness and negligence and wished he were better at resisting temptation.²⁵ But his diary warns us against taking the polarities etched in the polemical and prescriptive literature too much at face value.

It also alerts us to the fact that life-writing of this kind is an elaborate form of self-fashioning. Lowe's inner struggles against the lures of drinking and idle leisure pursuits are a variation on a perennial theme in godly lives and autobiographies, where they occupy a key place in narratives of religious conversion. Samuel Rogers remembered that he had 'passed many a day of vanitye' in his youth; John Dane recalled how he 'was given to pastime and to dancing' until his conscience brought him to a true apprehension of God; Nehemiah Wallington was ashamed of his adolescent 'jesting and dalliance' with attractive young maids and the stolen shilling he and a playmate spent on cakes and ale; and Richard Baxter likewise looked back regretfully on the addiction to gambling and excessive 'love of Romances, Fables and old Tales' which had marked his teenage years. The future Quaker Mary Pennington's spiritual awakening was also accompanied by a decision to sequester herself from 'my former vain company' and to refuse to take part in playing cards, while the Scottish Puritan Mistress Rutherford similarly

withdrew from the sports in which her household habitually engaged on the Sabbath after she began to embrace the gospel during her girlhood.²⁶ It was in narratives such as these that Puritans constructed their segregation from the culture of the 'carnal' multitude, but we may need to consider the possibility that what they recorded on paper eclipses the real nature and texture of social relations. It may tell us more about how they *wished* they had acted than about how they had actually behaved. It may exaggerate the degree of antagonism that existed between Puritanism and the people at large.

The fact remains that a sense of being despised and hated by the impious and unregenerate was a vital element in Puritan identity. Harassment by the reprobate was thought to be the inevitable lot of the elect, a veritable sign that God had selected them for eternal redemption. Hence the pride they took in the derogatory epithet which the 'profane' applied to them; hence the distinctive baptismal names of 'godly signification' they gave their children in some parts of England, intent on marking themselves out from the rest; hence too their instinct to maximise the social stress they experienced by shunning their neighbours. Puritans, it may be said, deliberately courted and cultivated their own unpopularity. We may conclude with the observation that the very conviction of being a persecuted remnant, separated from the mass of society by the ineluctable logic of the doctrine of double predestination, could ironically be immensely appealing and empowering. It is one of the enduring paradoxes of Puritanism that an elitist theology that consigned the vast majority to damnation in hell proved able to engender and sustain a popular movement.

Notes

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6. M. Spufford, 'Puritanism and social control?', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 57.
7. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, ch. 5.
8. Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, rough music and the "reform of popular culture" in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 105 (1984), 79–113.
9. British Library, MS Sloane 1457; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC MS V. a. 436.
10. John Dane, 'A declaration of remarkabell prouedences in the corse of my lyfe', *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 8 (1854), 151.
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15. Quoted in W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 280–1.
16. F. Bremer and E. Rydell, 'Performance art? Puritans in the pulpit', *History Today*, 45 (1995), 50–4, at 53.
17. M. Todd, *The Culture of Scottish Protestantism* (New Haven, 2002), p. 392.
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17 Puritanism and gender

ANN HUGHES

'She filled every Relation with the Exercise of such Graces and Duties as were suitable thereunto, knowing that where Relative duties are neglected, and not made Conscience of, there also our pretended Religion is in Vain. First, As a Wife; She was singular, and very Exemplary, in that reverence and obedience which she yielded to her Husband, both in Words and Deeds.'¹

Thus the ejected minister and biographer Samuel Clarke eulogised his wife of fifty years in the life he published after her death. This typical if problematic source for a Puritan woman introduces some of the themes of this chapter. Puritan divinity had implications for all aspects of human life; Puritans were exhorted to demonstrate their faith through the daily performance of 'relative duties' within their households as well as through pious activities more narrowly defined. For women, the duties of a wife took priority; the implications that followed, and the ways in which women found meaning and influence within Puritan families and networks are a central concern of this chapter. But the hierarchies of gender are part of the fundamental ordering of societies, so we need to consider what Puritanism contributed to the expectations and possibilities for the proper roles and behaviour of women and men. Moreover, gendered language provided a profoundly influential set of symbols and metaphors through which people understood contrast and division (in this context particularly the contrast between the true and false church) and relationships of power and authority (such as the relationship between Christ and the church).² This chapter thus discusses the impact of Puritanism on styles of manliness and the importance of gendered religious language. It draws mainly on English material from the later sixteenth century to the later seventeenth century, with some reference to Scotland and New England, and its focus is on 'church-style' or mainstream Puritanism with brief remarks on the very important themes of women's activities and gendered relationships within separatism and sectarian congregations.

The impact of Puritanism on gendered relationships in the household has dominated the historiography, drawing especially on the household manuals, marriage sermons and godly lives written by pastors such as Samuel Clarke, William Whately, Thomas Gataker, John Dod and Robert Cleaver, with William Gouge's *Domesticall Duties* the most characteristic.³ We now appreciate that these sources describe ideals and aspirations rather than the reality of Puritan households, and perhaps apply especially to clerical establishments. An older debate about whether there was a distinctly 'Puritan' family has proved fruitless; scholars now generally agree that Puritans urged particularly zealous adherence to mostly conventional family duties with complex implications.⁴ From some perspectives Puritan teaching entailed an intensification of patriarchal authority, making the husband or father a quasi-priest in his godly family. Puritan scripturalism stressed the necessity for female subordination and obedience: 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection' (1 Timothy 2:11) is a characteristic text, echoed in the table of contents of Gouge's *Domesticall Duties* where he insisted on 'Subjection, the general head of all wives duties'. The ideal woman in conduct books and sermons was a snail, confined to her house: Margaret Ducke, whose funeral sermon Gouge preached, was 'so far from the gadding disposition of other talking, walking women, that she was for the most part as a snail, Domi-porta, within her own shell and family'.⁵ Puritanism encouraged a harsh and discriminatory social discipline fuelled by a conviction of the weakness and sinfulness of women, and inspired the prosecution of vulnerable and deluded women as witches.

Puritan zeal for social and sexual purification aroused frequent accusations of hypocrisy, and in some communities and at some times (as in the 1650s) it had particularly grim implications for women who bore illegitimate children or were accused of adultery. However, Puritanism also required high moral standards of men, and tended to challenge rather than confirm the conventional 'double standard' which regarded male sexual misbehaviour more indulgently. Witchcraft, on the other hand, was a European phenomenon, clearly connected to the religious uncertainties of the Reformation but not, if we look beyond England, Scotland and New England, easily connected to specific confessional identities, Catholic or Protestant.⁶ There are also positive assessments of the impact of Puritanism on the more usual experience of men and women in propertied households, such as those by Anthony Fletcher and Diane Willen. For Willen godliness 'tempered' rather than reinforced patriarchy. Puritans promoted loving cooperation between husband and wife in the creation of godly households, while Puritan

practical divinity, stressing an intense individual relationship with God, as well as strenuous performance of social roles, offered significant opportunities for female agency. Puritanism was a demanding creed: both men and women had to demonstrate their godliness through zealous fulfilment of their 'relative' duties. The frequently stressed parallel between the marital relationship and the ties between Christ and his church implied a relationship of love as well as of subordination. In Ephesians wives were instructed to 'submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord' but husbands were to 'love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church' (5:23–5). Thus a Scottish minister advised husbands to treat their wives with the 'sanctified affection' of Christ for his church.⁷ Consequently Fletcher has argued that Puritanism promoted passionate, sexually fulfilling marital partnerships. As the disagreements amongst historians about the ultimate impact of Puritanism suggest, its implications were variable and contradictory because godliness, and still more God's inscrutable decrees whereby some were elected to salvation and others damned, were not in origin or essence social or gendered categories. Women, and the poor, were as likely to be God's elect saints as men or the rich. Women's obedience to their heavenly father might thus be in conflict with their earthly duties. This chapter will thus not attempt to come to some overall simple judgement about the positive or negative impact of Puritanism on women or gendered relationships, but will explore its complexities and contradictions.

The experiences of ministers' wives offer an instructive case study of these complexities. The households of godly clergy are frequently presented as ideals in the writings of Puritan ministers. The ideal – and perhaps also the reality – of the Puritan minister's wife seems on first sight to be an especially restricted one, for at least two reasons. For the male clergy whose writings we rely on, it was essential to their standing in their communities that they exemplified hierarchical marriage, with obedient and dutiful wives, particularly as clerical marriage was a relatively recent, and somewhat controversial phenomenon. Samuel Clarke described how his wife Katherine 'never rose from the table, even when they were alone, but she made courtesy. She never drank to him without bowing. His word was a law unto her'. Katherine's biographer, and husband, Samuel Clarke had lost his living in 1662 and it was particularly important for the nonconformist clergy, deprived of their public ministry, to demonstrate blameless domestic lives.⁸ Secondly, because a clerical household was structured around the vital pastoral and preaching activities of a godly minister, women's own religious status

was inevitably secondary and it was rarely possible for a minister's wife to demonstrate the sort of passive one-upwomanship, discussed below, that could be deployed by women who were more godly than their husbands. William Gouge's own wife, Elizabeth was predictably 'a pious, prudent, provident, painful, careful, faithful, helpful, grave, modest, sober, tender, loving wife, mother, mistress, neighbour' who 'most prudently and providently ordered the affairs of her house, whereby he had the more leisure to attend his public function'. Nonetheless it is clear that ministers' wives could be formidably influential in the moral and religious lives of their households and parishes during their lives as well as becoming exemplars through the way they were portrayed after death. Elizabeth Gouge 'well knew how to keep both children and servants in dutiful awe'.⁹ Occasionally there are hints of assertiveness or independence on the part of ministers' wives; the wife of John Wilson, minister at Boston in New England, had refused for five years to join him in New England, and he seems to have been anxious about her orthodoxy during the 'Antinomian Controversy'.¹⁰

Ministers' wives are the hardest cases, and the sources for them are the most stereotyped, but if we read them carefully we see that within the conventional patriarchal model there was much scope for women's religious initiative. Ministers' wives, who might also be ministers' daughters, were relatively well educated for women – avid readers and, more exceptionally, writers. Samuel Clarke's life of Katherine includes extensive extracts from her own writings, from her scripture notes and from her account 'of her self, and of God's gracious dealing with her'. As she explained, 'My father caused me to write sermons and to repeat the same. As also to learn Mr Perkins his Catechism.' Elizabeth Gouge took care to 'put in practice this precept of the Apostles to wives, Let them ask their husbands at home' (1 Corinthians 14:35), but she was an educated woman and an educator in her own right. She had taught her children so well that by the time they were three years old they knew their father's catechism by heart. She had 'penned sundry devout prayers' and 'many divine directions for devotions' and had a 'pretty library' of English divinity books.¹¹

Richard Baxter's life of his wife openly displays the ambiguities of Puritan marriage. He acknowledged the danger that ministers' praise for their own wives or other godly women might be primarily a means by which they validated their own authority and influence: 'I doubt not but some of these accusers will say, why open you all this? were not you the master? and do not you hereby praise your self, or else confess she was your governess?' Like Clarke he reprinted some of his wife's (and his

mother-in-law's) own writings, appealing to the example of John Fox who printed 'a great number of as mean letters as any of these, even some of women'. On midnight, 10 April, 'a day and night never to be forgotten', Margaret (Charlton) Baxter, 'thy unworthy, unthankful, hard-hearted creature' pondered, 'the time will come, and is at hand, when all the children shall be separate from the Rebels and be called home to dwell with their Father, their Head and Husband; and the elect shall be gathered into one' – using familial imagery that we will return to. Baxter defended his wife's public role: 'There are some things charged on her as faults, which I shall mention. 1. That she busied her head so much about Churches, and works of Charity, and was not content to live privately and quietly. But this is but just what prophane unbelievers say against all zeal, and serious godliness: what needs there all this ado? Doth not Paul call some women his helps in the Gospel?' Indeed, in another section, it was Margaret's lack of assertiveness that drew criticism: 'My dear wife was faulty indeed in talking so little of Religion in Company': a fear of hypocrisy led to neglect of 'the outside of her duty, as to the speaking part', so that she would not pray formally in their family in Richard's absence although she would read and discuss religious matters privately with her servants.¹²

The complex interactions of subordination and initiative found in clergy wives can be paralleled in more general discussions of women and Puritan piety. John Cotton preached in Boston in 1640 that 'Godly women ... may sometimes be more apprehensive of the mysteries of salvation than the best ministers of the gospel.'¹³ Richard Sibbes claimed that 'for the most part women have sweet affections to religion, and therein they oft go beyond men'. Both sympathisers, like Sibbes, and enemies of Puritanism thought female piety was more intense and perhaps more effective than men's. It might be, positively, that women's nurturing and emotional nature, their passivity, made them more able to subordinate themselves to an all-powerful God, or that God manifested his strength through his capacity to inspire or strengthen the weak. More negatively, opponents of Puritanism emphasised that women's weakness made them more vulnerable to error, as the orthodox godly in the 1640s and 1650s explained the prominence of female members in sects through the warnings in 2 Timothy 3:6–7, that false prophets 'creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'. The conformist Richard Hooker claimed Puritans worked particularly hard to win over women, 'those whose judgements are commonly weakest by reason of their sex'. This was partly because they

were more 'propense and inclinable to holiness', but also because of 'the eagerness of their affection, that maketh them, which way soever they take, diligent in drawing their husbands, children, servants, friends and allies the same way'.¹⁴ It might be that accounts of exemplary godly women in lives and funeral sermons were more influential than descriptions of men, in shaming male readers who fell short in the religious devotion displayed by ostensibly weaker women.¹⁵

As Hooker's remarks suggest, the image of the Puritan woman as a snail, confined within her house, is misleading. The household itself should not be defined as a private world cut off from public affairs, for propertied households were centres of employment and training, as well as of economic, political and religious influence. Puritan women were busy and preoccupied with children, servants and neighbours, but amongst their domestic routines and familial responsibilities they had space to develop an intimate relationship with God through a daily practice of piety, through individual meditation, self-examination, prayer and Bible reading. The diary of a godly gentlewoman such as Lady Margaret Hoby, as well as the lives and funeral sermons quoted earlier, suggest that women may have been better able than men to sustain such a regime. Rigorous introspection might lead to an assurance of salvation that facilitated a broader impact on family and community. On other occasions, however, and for some women throughout much of their lives, Puritan piety might bring anxiety, guilt and melancholy. The Surrey gentlewoman Lady Joan Drake, convinced she had committed the unpardonable (and horrifyingly undefined) sin suffered terrifying torment. It took much heavy-duty counselling from moderate Puritan luminaries such as Archbishop Ussher, John Preston, John Dod and Thomas Hooker, before she died confident of her assurance in 1625. Bereavement caused particular difficulties for conscientious Puritan women such as the pious melancholic Mary Boyle Rich, countess of Warwick, when grief was compounded by guilt and fear that they were being punished by God, their heavenly father, for setting too much store by their earthly family. Katherine Clarke, examining her heart on why she was 'so overwhelmed with melancholy' following the death of her son, wondered 'whether carnal and immoderate affections were not the great cause of my trouble'. Sarah Savage, daughter of the eminent nonconformist Philip Henry, noted that her greatest sin was 'too much love of, and too many cares for, my children'.¹⁶

Such difficulties were experienced alongside the demanding and influential duties of Bible reading, repetition of sermons, prayer and discussion with children and servants. Beyond the household Puritanism

validated women's charitable activities and moral influence, and shared godliness enabled a variety of reciprocal relationships between men and women besides kin, particularly between ministers and godly women. Such mutually satisfying relationships were characteristic of Reformed religion in England and Scotland from the earliest times, as we know from the pioneering work of Collinson on John Knox and Anne Locke. As with Joan Drake, ministers might provide spiritual reassurance but the women's respect validated the ministers in turn. The godly women were usually socially superior to the clerics, providing patronage and other practical help. Thomas Hooker indeed found a wife amongst Drake's household servants. Shared, close emotional ties are demonstrated in the intimate letters between the Scots minister Samuel Rutherford and his network of female friends, as in the consolation sent to the Viscountess Kenmure on the death of her husband, offering 'comfort now at such a time as this, wherein your dearest Lord hath made you a widow, that ye shall be a free woman for Christ, who is now suiting for marriage-love of you'.¹⁷

There were a range of possible interactions between women's connections and influence beyond their kin and household on the one hand, and their relationships with their husbands on the other. Where women were, and were recognised as being more godly than their husbands, female autonomy might be demonstrated in very subtle ways. Jane Ratcliffe, the wife of a Chester Alderman, was a pious woman opposed to extravagance in dress while her husband regarded a wife's elaborate display as essential to his standing in the city. Jane's biographer, the minister John Ley, described an occasion where she reluctantly agreed to obey her husband's order to wear a costly dress. The ostentatious display of submission and obedience demonstrated Jane's godliness but also her disapproval of and religious superiority to her husband. The display was witnessed and publicised by a minister who provided an alternative source of male authority and approval, and of course underlined the ultimate priority of obedience to God.¹⁸ In some cases there was complete harmony between the two aspects of women's lives. The New England poet Anne Bradstreet was a loyal, loving and busy wife, running a godly household in the absence of her husband. Her conceptualisation of God variously as a father and husband – 'thy maker is thy husband. Nay more, I am a member of His body, he my head' – was fully compatible with affection for her earthly masculine authority, her husband Simon,

My head, my heart, mine Eyes, my life, nay more,
My joy, my Magazine of earthly store,

If two be one, as surely thou and I,
How stayest thou there, whilst I at Ipswich lye?¹⁹

In the main, the Bradstreets were part of orthodox Puritan networks in Massachusetts, although Simon Bradstreet had more sympathy than most for Anne Hutchinson, who was banished for her part in the 'antinomian' challenge in the colony. Hutchinson illuminates the ways in which conventional female activities and networks facilitated religious education and discussion – and the hostility aroused when women were seen as moving beyond their accepted roles, or blamed for the rise of unorthodox ideas. In the spring of 1637 it was alleged that Hutchinson was using the customary gatherings of women during childbirth to propagate her views, and that some sixty to eighty people, perhaps a quarter of Boston's adult population, attended her twice-weekly 'lectures' denouncing the ministers' covenant of 'works'.²⁰ John Cotton, the Boston minister with close links (at first) to Hutchinson, acknowledged her own abilities and the value of female religious influence. Hutchinson herself had 'good parts and gifts fit to instruct your children and servants and to be helpful to your husband in the government of the family'. He believed that many New England women had

received much good from the conference of this our Sister and by your converse with her and from her it may be you have received helps in your spiritual estates, and have been brought from resting upon any duties or works of righteousness of your own. But let me say this to you all, and to all the Sisters of other Congregations. Let not the good you have received from her, make you to receive all for good that comes from her; for you see she is but a Woman and many unsound and dangerous principles are held by her.

More hostile ministers such as Hugh Peters, however, denounced Hutchinson for transgressing conventions of gender: 'I would commend this to your consideration that you have stepped out of your place, you have rather been a husband than a wife and a preacher than a hearer; and a magistrate than a subject', while John Wilson, who had anxieties about the conformity of his wife, complained that 'the misgovernment of this woman's tongue hath been a great cause of this disorder'.²¹ Hutchinson had no quarrel with her own husband who shared her unorthodoxy and her misfortunes, and denied that she had moved out of her female sphere: her all-women religious discussion groups were private gatherings, not public challenges to ministers and magistrates. Her criticisms

were theological – not attacks on gender hierarchies – although conventional assumptions about appropriate female behaviour were used to discredit her.

In this Hutchinson has much in common with the sectarian and prophetic women of the radical Puritan movements of the 1640s and 1650s. Sectarian women were not necessarily defying their husbands and certainly not making any general claims about women's equality, but they did take advantage of the overwhelming duty to obey God rather than man to justify their own religious choices. Gouge himself condemned women for 'such a pleasing of her husband as offendeth Christ' while Paul's strictures on female submission were qualified in the case of an 'unbelieving husband' (1 Corinthians 7:13–15).²² Paul's texts were used by the separatist and prominent Leveller Katherine Chidley to justify printing of denunciations of presbyterians such as Thomas Edwards, although there is no evidence her own husband disagreed with her; there was more domestic tension evident in the life of the religious moderate Jane Ratcliffe. A Bristol woman, Dorothy Hazzard, did develop a more overt challenge to the Church of England in the 1630s than that possible for her husband, a Puritan minister. She played a major role in founding the Broadmead gathered church that had a membership that was three-quarters female by the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Throughout the Interregnum religious conflict and the drive to obey God rather than man gave women the confidence to defy ministers and, sometimes, husbands. The women of the Fenstanton General Baptist congregation, for example, were argumentative, serious and independent women, although tormented by doubt and frequent deserters to the Quakers. In public, if not always so enthusiastically in private, the Quakers allowed women a major role as preachers and as authors of aggressive denunciations of religious and political authority in print and in person. Hester Biddle's pamphlets with titles such as *Wo to the City of Oxford* were paralleled by the public denunciations of Quaker persecution in Massachusetts by Mary Dyer, who had been an ally of Anne Hutchinson: 'woe be unto you for Humphrey Norton's sake'. Dyer was one of four Quakers hanged in 1659–60.²³ In 1650s England, the argument that God might fulfil his purposes specifically through the weak women who were the conduits for his prophetic words had dramatic consequences in the career of the Fifth Monarchist Anna Trapnel. Trapnel presented herself as 'a weak worthless creature, a babe in Christ, which makes his power the more manifest', but she welcomed a public and political role: 'for that she had been faithful in a little, she should be made an instrument of much more; for particular souls shall

not only have benefit by her, but the Universality of Saints shall have discoveries of God through her'.²⁴

The male roles possible within Puritanism were complex and fluid. Laymen might be authoritative, loving husbands and fathers and godly magistrates, but also, as members of the godly, brides of Christ. John Winthrop thought 'my soul had as familiar and sensible society with him, as my wife could have with the kindest husband ... how did my soul melt with joy'. The erotic Song of Songs, like the marital analogies in Ephesians, implied that men were in a passive, female relationship with Christ even as they headed their earthly households. For the clergy, as 'Patriarchs at home, but brides of Christ in spirit', in Susan Hardman Moore's vivid formulation, the contrasts were sharper.²⁵ Ministers, God's servants on earth, were super-patriarchs, but they were also charismatic preachers weeping with emotion in their pulpits, resorting habitually to feminised language in spiritual exegesis and private self-examination. The diary of young Essex curate Samuel Rogers provides some characteristic examples: 'Lord, I am thine, I am thine; I am overcome by thy looks, thou hast ravished me with thy looks oh Lord Jesus.'²⁶ As we have seen above, a broad range of relationships between ministers and women were sanctioned within godly networks. These close ties with women who were not wives or other kin were often mutually supportive, as with Rutherford and Kenmure, Ley and Ratcliffe, and, more unevenly, Hooker and Drake; but ministers' spiritual dependency on Christ might be combined with practical dependency on elite women. Samuel Rogers was predictably intimidated by Lady Mary Vere, a generous but forbidding patron of godly ministers, when he served her as chaplain.

Godly ministers also had intense homosocial ties, close connections with other men developed at university or through service as curates in the households of senior ministers, and cemented through a hectic round of godly sociability dominated by ministers at fasts, conferences, lectures by combination and dinners.²⁷ There are important implications for gendered ties in the lives of ministers collected by Samuel Clarke, as well as in the accounts of godly women. The moving example of the Staffordshire nonconformist John Ball's farewell to his friend Julines Herring as he went into exile in the Netherlands vividly evokes intense male friendship:

Some who beheld the greetings betwixt him and reverend Master Ball of Whitmore, profess that they stick too deep in their breasts to be forgotten. For after they had spent together well nigh one day

and one night in conference, they did (like Jonathon and David) frequently fall upon one another with mutual embracings, they parted and closed again a third and a fourth time, and when Master Herring was on horseback, and Master Ball on foot, they went together, often shaking hands over the hedges; and upon the final salutation they comforted each other with this consideration, that though they should never see one another on earth, yet they should meet in heaven.²⁸

The sermons of the clergy and the meditations of lay women both deployed gendered, marital imagery to express the emotional closeness to God that was part of the Puritan drive for assurance and perhaps qualified the equally Calvinist stress on God as a remote and stern judge. It has been suggested that this amounted to a feminising of Puritanism, to offering a female or feminised spiritual identity to men and women alike. Within Puritan divinity (as in early modern culture more generally) gendered contrasts were fundamental to men's and women's understandings of their own faith, of their relationships with God and of the true and false church. One minister urged his congregation to search their hearts to see whether they were 'Christ's spouse or the devil's strumpet'.²⁹ One of the important, but ultimately imponderable issues within a discussion of Puritanism and gender is how the meanings of such language differed for men and for women. We can presume that when women like Anne Bradstreet or Margaret Baxter, who were wives, used the language of Ephesians or the Song of Songs, the resonances were not the same as when husbands and fathers like Samuel Rutherford or John Winthrop resorted to it. It is striking that Quaker women writers, whose language and religious activism drew on Puritan impulses but moved far beyond them, sought to deconstruct and challenge conventional uses of gendered religious language, detaching it altogether from actual social relations, and confining it solely to understandings of true and false religion: 'thou tellest the people women must not speak in a church, whereas it is not spoke only of a female, for we are all one, both male and female, in Christ Jesus, but it's weakness that is the woman by the Scriptures forbidden, for else thou putttest the Scriptures at a difference in themselves ... for the Scriptures do say that all the church may prophesy one by one'.³⁰ This is an extreme example of the generally creative engagement of men and women with the gendered language of scripture. Within the varied faith of Puritanism, religious conviction helped to construct gender relations, as gender relations in turn had a profound impact on religious practice.

Notes

1. Samuel Clarke, *A Looking Glass for Good Women to Dress Themselves By* (London, 1677), p. 18.
2. Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', in Scott, ed., *Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1996).
3. See the works by Jackie Eales in Further reading.
4. See the works by Fletcher, Todd and Collinson in Further reading. This debate overlaps with earlier discussions about whether there is a distinctly Protestant (as opposed to Catholic) approach to family life.
5. William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), contents page; Gouge, *A Funerall Sermon* (London, 1646), p. 27.
6. M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World* (London, 2000), discusses the general issues.
7. Quoted in D. G. Mullan, 'Women in Scottish Divinity, c. 1590–c. 1640', in E. Ewan and M. M. Meikle, eds., *Women in Scotland, c. 1100–c. 1750* (East Linton, 1999), p. 31.
8. The Henrys discussed by Patricia Crawford are another example (see n. 16); Clarke, *A Looking Glass*, p. 18.
9. Nicholas Guy, *Pieties Pillar* (London, 1626), pp. 41, 44, 46.
10. M. Winship, *The Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson* (Lawrence, KS, 2002), p. 140.
11. Clarke, *A Looking Glass*, pp. 7, 39–43; Guy, *Pieties Pillar*, pp. 46–8.
12. *A Breviate of the Life of Margaret, the Daughter of Francis Charlton of Apply in Shropshire, Esq. and Wife of Richard Baxter* (London, 1681), pp. 20, 64, 66, 79, 85.
13. Winship, *Anne Hutchinson*, p. 141.
14. Quoted in P. Collinson, 'The role of women in the English Reformation illustrated by the life and friendships of Anne Locke', in his *Godly People* (London, 1983), p. 274; also quoted by M. J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600–1850* (London, 1999), p. 27.
15. A point made by C. Peters, *Women in Early Modern Britain, 1450–1640* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 152–4.
16. Clarke, *A Looking Glass*, p. 63; P. Crawford, 'Katherine and Philip Henry and their children: a case study in family ideology', reprinted in her *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 2004), p. 186.
17. For Rutherford see Mullan, 'Women in Scottish Divinity'; T. Webster, '"Kiss me with the kisses of his mouth": gender inversion and Canticles in godly spirituality', in T. Betteridge, ed., *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2002), 148–64.
18. See Peter Lake in Further reading.
19. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, p. 137; Bradstreet, 'A Letter to her Husband, absent upon Publick employment', in Germaine Greer *et al.*, eds., *Kissing the Rod* (London, 1988), p. 137.
20. Winship, *Anne Hutchinson*, p. 85.
21. *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, ed. D. D. Hall, 2nd edn (Durham, NC, and London, 1990), pp. 370–1, 381–4.
22. Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, contents page.

23. *The Records of a Church of Christ*, ed. R. Hayden, Bristol Record Society, 27 (1974); *Records of the Churches of Christ Gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham*, ed. E.B. Underhill, Hanserd Knollys Society, 9 (1854); Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, pp. 46–8.
24. A. Hughes, "'Not Gideon of Old': Anna Trapnel and Oliver Cromwell', *Cromwelliana*, series II (2005), 77–96.
25. S.H. Moore, 'Sexing the soul: gender and the rhetoric of Puritan piety', in R.N. Swanson, ed., *Gender and Christian Religion* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 183–4, 175.
26. *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–1638*, ed. T. Webster and K. Shippes, Church of England Record Society, 11 (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 110 (July 1638).
27. T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997).
28. Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines*, 3rd edn (London, 1677), pp. 166–7.
29. Quoted in Webster, "'Kiss me with the kisses of his mouth'", p. 148.
30. Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, *To the Priests and People of England* (1655), reprinted in P. Salzman, ed., *Early Modern Women's Writing* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 146–7.

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18 Puritanism and literature

N. H. KEEBLE

THE PURITAN PRESS

Puritanism was an intrinsically bookish movement. Just as the spread of Protestantism through Europe in the early sixteenth century was greatly facilitated by, if not dependent upon, the resources of the printing press, so the penetration by Puritanism of the nation's religious, political and cultural life was achieved primarily through the printed word. Religious works comprised at least half the 100,000 or so titles that represent the total output of the press from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the end of the seventeenth century.¹ Of these, a very significant proportion – and during periods in the seventeenth century a majority – were Puritan. They included the century's bestsellers which sold in unprecedented numbers: Arthur Dent's fictionalised dialogue *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* (1601) went through over thirty editions by 1682; John Ball's *Short Catechisme* (1615?) nearly sixty editions by 1689; Richard Baxter's 600-page treatise on preparing for *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650) reached its fourteenth edition by 1688 and his evangelistic *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658) its twenty-eighth edition by 1696; the first part of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) reached its twenty-second edition by the end of the century.²

Contemporaries recognised the extraordinary asset that had been, as they firmly believed, providentially placed in their hands. 'Printing', wrote Richard Baxter, 'hath been a blessed means of increasing knowledge and religion' for 'the Press hath a louder voice' than that of any single person: 'the Writings of Divines are nothing else but a preaching the Gospel to the eye, as the *voice* preacheth it to the ear'. In his view, the printed word had a number of advantages over oral preaching: readers, unlike auditors, need not rely on their memories; books, unlike a minister's sermon, can be chosen to address an individual's particular need and circumstance; they are more readily accessible than good preachers; and books can be studied at the reader's own pace. Their value was especially evident during the period of persecution that followed

1660 when publication represented the one way in which Puritan ministers, separated from their congregations as nonconformists, could continue their ministries: 'Preachers may be silenced or banished, when Books may be at hand'.³ Like *The Pilgrim's Progress* (and many of his now less well-known publications), Bunyan's spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding* (1666) was a prison book, written by an author who, unable in person to 'perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me, to you-ward', through print addresses his congregation from his prison. His precedent lay in the epistles St Paul had written from captivity in Rome, in Bunyan's time thought to include the epistle (1 Timothy) which provided him with his title (1:15).⁴ From the prisons of the Interregnum as well as of the Restoration, Quakers smuggled out for printing a stream of admonitions, epistles, jeremiads, exhortations and prophecies. And, as well as works written explicitly for a public readership, there was the extraordinary mass of private letters, commonplace books, conversion narratives and diaries, many of which were subsequently printed to become classics of autobiographical writing: Lady Brilliana Harley's *Letters* (1854), George Fox's *Journal* (1696), Richard Baxter's *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ* (1696), Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of the life of her regicide husband John* (1806), Oliver Heywood's *Diaries* (1882–5), Edmund Ludlow's *Memoirs* (1698) and, of course, *Grace Abounding*. In short, Puritans had what one historian has described as an 'obsession with the written word'.⁵

PURITAN READERS AND WRITERS

Producing books would not, of course, have had much effect were there not persons capable of reading them. In a population of some 3 million in 1500 and 5.5 million in 1700, full literacy (that is, the ability both to read and to write) was possessed by perhaps 15 per cent of the population at the start of this period, and no more than 30 per cent at its close.⁶ Puritanism saw it as one of its tasks to increase this proportion so that believers might study the Bible and benefit from the wealth of religious works available: 'By all means let children be taught to read', parents were exhorted, 'if you are never so poor, and whatever shift you make.'⁷

As that remark implies, Puritan writers were especially anxious to reach the socially disadvantaged and marginalised who had never before been supposed capable of literary engagement. Habitually Puritan authors addressed their texts to the 'vulgar', that is, the mass of the common people. Baxter would rather that his printed sermons 'might be

numbered with those Bookes that are carried up and downe the Country from doore to doore in Pedlers Packs' than with those that 'are set up in the Libraries of learned Divines'. To reach such readers, breviates and chapbook versions of larger texts were frequently available, hawked for a few pennies – as of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1684.⁸ Ministers frequently gave away copies of their own books, and might arrange with their publishers to forgo profit in order to have them sold as cheaply as possible. Reading aloud to groups, lending, borrowing and bequeathing books, establishing public libraries, these and other expedients were also much encouraged among the godly, facilitating the dissemination of texts among, and access to them by, the impoverished. Bunyan's first wife came from a poor family, but Puritan texts were not beyond its reach: she brought with her as dowry two of the century's bestsellers: Lewis Bayly's *Practise of Pietie* (1612) and Dent's *Plaine Mans Path-way* (GA, §15).

Puritanism's drive for readers was a key step in moving the patronage of literature away from privileged elites (notably, the court) to a popular readership, a necessary prerequisite for the development of the novel in the next century. By so doing, Puritanism revalued not only the book but the act of reading. Puritan readers, whatever their socio-economic background, were not to be unduly impressed by the fact of a book's publication, nor by the reputation of its author. They were, as Bunyan's pastor John Gifford taught, to take 'not up any truth upon trust, as from this or that or another man or men, but to cry mightily to God, that he would convince us of the reality thereof' (GA, §117). In the oft-quoted words of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, the godly were themselves to 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good', to assess, weigh and analyse evidence before accepting an author's contentions. Faith, that is to say, carried the obligation to be a critical and self-aware reader.⁹

If the Puritan press reached out to new categories and classes of reader, so, too, it was open to new kinds of writer. An increasing number of non-university men and, for effectively the first time, many women were inspired to write, and to publish, by their Puritan experience. From its inception in the early 1650s Quakerism in particular was extraordinarily adept at making repeated use of the press to disseminate its message, publishing broadsides, tracts, prophecies and personal testimonies, as well as polemical and controversial pieces, by a wide range of male and female authors. Margaret Fox challenged patriarchal prejudice head-on in her argument in *Womens Speaking Justified* (1666) that women are as entitled as men to a public voice (and so, implicitly, to publish).¹⁰ If in the 1640s and 50s there was a democratisation of

the press, a 'downwards dissemination of print',¹¹ it was in very large part achieved through the confidence to access, and to participate in, literary culture that Puritanism inspired in those hitherto excluded from it.

PURITANS AND CENSORSHIP

All this activity represented as significant a challenge to governing elites as did the political and military threat posed by Puritanism. Those elites – even the Puritan regimes of the Interregnum – hence sought to restrain and control what was published. There was nothing novel about this. From its inception printing had had to contend with government attempts to control the output of the press. The printing trade and pre-publication censorship developed together. Essentially, every legally published title required prior approval (that is, a licence to publish) from an appointed censor (generally an episcopalian cleric), and that approval was of course not forthcoming for texts that challenged either political or ecclesiastical authority. Very substantial fines and terms of imprisonment, and even banishment, were risked by printers who produced, booksellers who disseminated and authors who wrote unlicensed texts.¹² Amongst the many freedoms championed by Puritanism was hence freedom of the press, most famously in Milton's 1644 tract *Areopagitica . . . for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing*.

Puritan authors adopted a number of expedients to circumvent the restraining authority of the censor. Heterodox works, such as Milton's own theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, and satirical works, such as Andrew Marvell's Restoration verse satires, might circulate in manuscript and not be put into print. In printed works, self-censorship might operate, but so too did a variety of rhetorical and allusive strategies that allowed oblique and implicit expression of meanings that could be denied if need be. In fiction and allegory the relationship between imagined and contemporary worlds might be particularly suggestive: how far does the depiction of Satan on his 'throne of royal state' in *Paradise Lost* (*PL*, II.1) represent evil, how far corrupt monarchy, and how far specifically Charles I (or, indeed, Cromwell)? Is it worldliness in general, or Restoration London in particular, that is represented in *Vanity Fair* and, if the latter, does Bunyan glance at Charles II in its lord, Beelzebub?¹³

Often, rather than work through allusion and implication, authors resorted to anonymous and unlicensed publication. This was commonest among more radical Puritans, such as the Quakers, less frequent

among Independents and Presbyterians with their greater respect for legality. The Quaker leader George Fox was habitually anonymous in his (literally) hundreds of tracts. Of Bunyan's sixty publications, only *The Pilgrim's Progress* appears to have been properly licensed. Indeed, the cat-and-mouse game with the censors and the authorities could become part of the rhetorical strategy of the texts themselves: in his printed but unlicensed prose satires *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672) and *Mr. Smirke* (1676), Marvell ridicules the impotency of the censors and the absurdities of the system they attempt to operate. The imprint of the former mockingly called attention to its illegal status: 'Printed for the Assigns of *John Calvin* and *Theodore Beza*'.¹⁴

Puritan publishing was hence often a joint, even communal, enterprise, requiring from printers, booksellers and other tradesmen a joint commitment with the author to challenge and outwit the agents of the state. The anonymous manifesto that may be taken to mark the inception of Puritanism as a publishing and literary tradition – *An Admonition to the Parliament* (1572) – was printed on a clandestine press. The mockingly scurrilous, subversively parodic and colloquially inventive anti-episcopal tracts by 'Martin Marprelate' (1588–9) were printed surreptitiously by a committed Puritan printer, Robert Waldegrave, on a portable press. The Leveller tracts of John Lilburne and Richard Overton were among a stream of texts produced in the Netherlands and smuggled into England in the 1640s. During the Restoration, a network of committed radical printers operated in London in defiance of the authorities. Husband and wife partnerships such as those of Giles and Elizabeth Calvert, Thomas and Anne Brewster, and John and Joan Darby, each at different times imprisoned for their activities, demonstrate that this was something far more than a business activity.¹⁵

THE PURITAN SELF

Though extraordinarily rich and diverse, the literature produced by these means exhibits a distinctively Puritan set of recurrent emphases and imaginative constructions. First among them is a preoccupation with the personal. An uncompromising individualism champions conscience above worldly authorities and always prefers inwardness and experiential immediacy to formalism and convention. It was for 'crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men' that Milton condemned the 'prelaticall tradition' in *Areopagitica* (1644), and for 'the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue

freely according to conscience, above all liberties' that he argued passionately in that tract.¹⁶ Throughout his writings there runs an opposition between the hollowness of habitual compliance with external forms and the integrity of inner commitment. The hypocrisy which he stigmatised in such phrases as 'a grosse conforming stupidity', 'the iron yoke of outward conformity', 'the ghost of a linnen decency', 'the gripe of custom' (*CPW*, II. 563–4), was conceived as the single most serious obstacle to the spiritual life, and sincerity as its highest virtue. This leads to Milton's paradoxical but understandable assertion that a person 'may be a heretick in the truth; . . . if he beleeves things only because his Pastor sayes so . . . though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresie' (*CPW*, II. 543). This Milton saw exemplified in Roman Catholicism: for him, Popery is 'the only or greatest Heresie' because its stress on obedience to ecclesiastical authority reduces faith to subservience, requiring its adherents to believe only 'as the church believes' (*CPW*, VIII. 420–1). Milton's God, the 'Spirit, that dost prefer/ Before all temples the upright heart and pure' (*PL*, I. 17–18), is more concerned with personal integrity than with compliant conformity to priestly dictates.

This privileging of inner commitment explains the otherwise puzzling insistence of Puritan writers upon their lack of qualification as writers. Bunyan's determination to convey in his writing, as in his preaching, 'what I felt, what I smartingly did feel' led him to present himself as an ill-educated and culturally impoverished writer solely dependent upon the Bible and divine illumination: he 'never endeavoured to, nor durst make use of other men's lines' for he 'found by experience, that what was taught me by the Word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to, by the soundest and best established Conscience' (*GA*, §§276, 285). Unlike 'carnal Priests' who 'tickle the ears of their hearer with vain Philosophy', he 'never went to School to *Aristotle* or *Plato*' and 'has not writ at a venture, nor borrowed my Doctrine from Libraries. I depend upon the sayings of no man'; instead, he offers the reader 'a parcel of plain, yet sound, true and home sayings' drawn from 'the Scriptures of Truth, among the true sayings of God'.¹⁷ Bunyan was hardly as poorly read as he pretends: the purpose of this insistence on his lack of resources is to create a persona trustworthy precisely because it speaks with the authority only of divinely guided personal experience. That is why, though vastly learned, Milton nevertheless claims, like Bunyan, to have formulated the arguments of his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* with 'no light, or leading receav'd from any man' but with 'only the infallible grounds of Scripture to be my

guide' (CPW, II. 433). In *Paradise Regained*, when Satan proposes mastery of Gentile learning as the way for the Messiah to fulfil his mission, the Son disdains all those resources of Greek and Roman culture that had shaped the Renaissance (and, indeed, Milton himself): 'he who receives/ Light from above, from the fountain of light,/ No other doctrine needs' (IV. 288–90).

This appeal to experiential (or, as the seventeenth-century term was, *experimental*) Christianity was encouraged both by the practice in gathered churches of requiring from prospective members accounts of their conversion experiences,¹⁸ and by the universally recognised duty of self-scrutiny to analyse spiritual progress.¹⁹ These practices lay behind the development of spiritual autobiography as a distinct genre of Puritan writing,²⁰ a genre that contributed to the development not only of autobiography but also of the novel: it was as the confessional autobiographies familiar to his readers that early in the eighteenth century Daniel Defoe presented his fictions *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*.²¹

THE PURITAN STYLE

As Bunyan's claim to offer 'plain ... home sayings' suggests, Puritanism associated individual integrity and authenticity with simplicity and plainness, in worship, in social manners and in aesthetics. The Quaker habit of using the familiar *thee* and *thou* to all, regardless of rank, epitomises this preference for plain dealing over the dictates of social and cultural etiquette. In *Paradise Lost*, Adam walks out to meet Raphael 'without more train/ Accompanied than with his own complete/ Perfections, in himself was all his state'. He has no need of 'the tedious pomp that waits/ On princes, when their rich retinue long/ Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold/ Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape' (v. 351–7). The ostentatious display beloved of the Stuarts has become contamination in that *besmeared*. Similarly, plainness is Puritanism's preferred stylistic option. 'In matters of religion he is learnedest who is plainest' says even Milton, and he reiterates the Puritan commonplace that 'in main matters of belief and salvation' the Bible is 'plane and easie to the poorest' (CPW, VII. 271–2, 302). Though in *Paradise Lost* generic decorum required of Milton the grandeur of epic style, plainness is nevertheless affirmed as virtue's style: it is the rhetorical dexterity taught by Classical rhetoricians that declares Satan's duplicity; Adam and Eve dress up neither themselves nor their words.²²

THE PURITAN LIFE

Such plain dealing inevitably affronted political and ecclesiastical hierarchies: there is hardly a Puritan writer of note who was not at some time arrested, imprisoned, mutilated, fined, bound over, pursued or persecuted. Though not in prison, Milton was 'fallen on evil days . . . In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,/ And solitude' (*PL*, vii. 26–8) when he wrote his three great Restoration poems. No wonder that in Puritan writing the Christian demeanour is almost by definition adversarial and the Christian condition oppressed. In Book xii of *Paradise Lost*, Michael foretells that the Apostles will be succeeded by 'grievous wolves' who will 'force the spirit of grace it self, and bind/ His consort liberty', with the result that 'heavy persecution' will fall on 'all who in the worship persevere/ Of spirit and truth' (xii. 508–35). 'You must', Evangelist warns Faithful and Christian, 'through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (*PP*, p. 87). In an inescapable reference to the plight of nonconformists in the 1660s, the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes* is dismayed at the suffering of God's chosen, dragged before 'unjust tribunals, under change of times,/ And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude' (lines. 695–6). Samson's triumph shows the Chorus's disillusion to be mistaken: troubles, far from causing dismay, should be welcomed for, in Milton's words, 'that which purifies us is trial' (*CPW*, II. 515). From the Lady in *Comus*, through Satan, Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* and the Son in *Paradise Regained* to Samson's despair, all Milton's great poems are focused upon the psychology of temptation and the challenge of remaining faithful in adversity. In this sense, Milton has only one subject, and it is a characteristically Puritan choice.

This constancy is most tellingly represented in the unwavering commitment of Abdiel, the one angel in *Paradise Lost* to resist Satan's blandishments:

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduc'd, untterrified,
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal,
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
 Though single. (v. 896–903)

Such resolution is not passivity. On the contrary, Puritanism promoted a vigorously active conception of the Christian life which was

characteristically rendered in dynamic images of action and endeavour. Moral responsibilities and spiritual demands are presented in terms of struggle and effort: 'our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion' (CPW, II. 543). The Puritan mind does not declare itself in a particular sectarianism or dogmatism: Christian understanding is a continuing process of education and spiritual enlightenment rather than a goal ever finally achieved. 'Truth', wrote Milton in *Areopagitica*, referring to Psalm 85:11, 'is compar'd in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick'n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition' (CPW, II. 543). What animates the tract is not the revelation of truth but the excitement of its pursuit through interrogation and debate: 'to be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it . . . is the golden rule in *Theology*' (CPW, II. 551).

In conceiving and representing this spiritual effort, the Puritan imagination was especially responsive to the narratives of the many historical battles and migrations through which God guides his chosen people Israel in the Old Testament and to the Bible's many metaphorical deployments of warfare and of wayfaring, culminating in the great dominical assertion of John 14:6 ('I am the way') and in the Pauline imagery of the race for salvation (e.g. 1 Corinthians 9:24) and of the armour of faith (e.g. Ephesians 6:11–13). Its preferred images and narrative patterns derive from journeying and combat, itinerancy and warfare – witness, for example, Benjamin Keach's *War with the Devil* (1673) and *Travels of True Godliness* (1683), and, of course, Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1684) and *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

THE PURITAN JOURNEY

The key to Puritan representations of the Christian life as a journey lies in chapter 11 of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Its image of the faithful as nomadic 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' who 'seek a country', 'that is, an heavenly' (Hebrews 11:13–16) structures *The Pilgrim's Progress*.²³ Puritans thought of themselves as 'Outlandish-men' like Christian and Faithful at Vanity Fair, that is, foreigners in transit (PP, p. 90). They were *Children of Light Walking in Darkness* (Thomas Goodwin (1636)) on a perambulation, a progress, a journey, even, in Edward Taylor's image of the saints 'Encoacht for Heaven', a stage-coach journey.²⁴

The topography of the Puritan journey was established by biblical narratives of desert journeys. Given their Eurocentric assumptions, we can understand that Puritan emigrants to America, 'satisfy'd, they had as plain a command of Heaven to attempt a Removal, as ever their Father *Abraham* had for his leaving the *Caldean Territories*',²⁵ supposed that, like him (Genesis 12:1–10, 14:4, 10), they were engaged on what Samuel Danforth called an *Errand into the Wilderness* (1670). When, however, in her untitled poem 'As weary pilgrim', the New England poet Anne Bradstreet creates a wilderness as the context of her mortal life, beset by 'dangers', 'travails', 'burning sun', 'briars and thorns', 'hungry wolves', 'erring paths' and 'parching thirst', it is not Massachusetts she is describing.²⁶ Bunyan, after all, found precisely the same topography in Bedfordshire, England: the narrator of *The Pilgrim's Progress* walks 'through the wilderness of this world' (*PP*, p. 9) and it was from the prison where 'I stick between the Teeth of the Lions in the Wilderness' that Bunyan addressed the reader of *Grace Abounding* (*GA*, p. 1). Such a portrayal of England as a desert prowled by wild beasts, like depictions of New England as a wasteland, is intertextual rather than referential, recalling a far distant land and time in order to trace in the authors' and readers' experience the patterns of significance which Hebrews taught them to read in Old Testament narratives. A Puritan reader would have recognised just this signification in the wilderness setting of the Son's encounter with Satan in *Paradise Regained*.²⁷ The work in which the Presbyterian nonconformist Thomas Gouge instructed London apprentices that we are to live 'as a citizen of heaven, and a pilgrim on the earth' is entitled *The Young Man's Guide through the Wilderness of this World to the Heavenly Canaan* (1670).

The journey is not an easy one. Unlike Bunyan's complacently (and tragically) confident Ignorance, the true pilgrim is spiritually alert and morally engaged at all times: '*Departing from iniquity*', wrote Bunyan, 'is not a work of an hour, or a day, or a week, or a month, or a year: *But it's a work will last thee thy life time*' (*MW*, ix. 276). This point was often made by associating with the figures of the journey and the pilgrimage the Pauline image of the race for the prize or crown of salvation (1 Corinthians 9:24; Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 12:1). It was with this image that Milton famously scorned the notion of religious retreat from the world: he could not praise 'a fugitive and cloister'd virtue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that slinks . . . out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat' (*CPW*, II. 515).

THE PURITAN HERO

Though the journey is the controlling metaphor of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan's allegory draws also upon another store of imagery: combat. Its climactic moments and exemplary figures are martial: Christian in his Pauline armour of faith confronting Apollyon; Valiant-for-Truth fighting so vigorously with his 'right Jerusalem blade' that his sword cleaves to his hand with blood; Greatheart the giant slayer (*PP*, pp. 56–60, 290–1, 295). The Puritan hero, however, bore no resemblance to the questing knight-errant of medieval chivalry. In the opening to Book IX of *Paradise Lost*, Milton mocks the 'long and tedious havoc' of medieval and Renaissance chivalric romance, and, asserting that he is 'Not sedulous by nature to indite/ Wars, hitherto the only argument/ Heroic deemed', explicitly rejects traditional epic heroic values. In their place, he offers as 'more heroic' than traditional epic subjects 'the better fortitude/ Of patience and heroic martyrdom' (IX. 14, 26–41). Michael's denigration of the heroic code as the worship of brute force, and of traditional heroes as 'Destroyers rightlier called and plagues of men' (XI. 689–97), is of a piece with this rejection, as is the attribution of the heroic 'virtues' to Satan. There is a strongly pacifist vein in Milton's later writing, especially in the Son's refusal in *Paradise Regained* of the 'ostentation vain of fleshly arm,/ And fragile arms' as means to secure his kingdom (III. 387–8), as there is generally in later seventeenth-century Puritan writing, which, disillusioned by the collapse of the New Model Army's achievements into military dictatorship, repudiated the use of 'carnal weapons' and insisted, in the words of John 18:36, that Christ's kingdom is 'not of this world'.

This repudiation of an ideal that had inspired Europe for two millennia not only declined to admire aggression: it also substituted for an elitist model an ideal attainable by every reader in the context of their daily lives. The 'better fortitude' that *Paradise Lost* defines in terms of self-denial rather than self-assertion, of trust rather than aggression (XII. 561–87), is not restricted to a privileged armigerous class. On the contrary, it is wholly consistent with worldly insignificance and powerlessness. Puritanism challenged every person to become a Christian hero in the context of their everyday domestic and commercial dealings. After the defeat of the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of presbyterian Puritanism during Elizabeth's reign, Puritan aspirations were redirected into works of homiletic and practical divinity. This programme of evangelical publishing ensured that when

political circumstances again favoured Puritanism in the 1640s, there was a body of committed support ready. This prolific output of sermons and expository treatises explaining the process of conversion and identifying the characteristics and duties of the saint was the work of men whom William Haller long ago styled the 'spiritual brotherhood' of preachers, mostly graduates of the University of Cambridge, where their undergraduate careers overlapped, who went on to minister in London, Essex and East Anglia.²⁸

Their treatises have no concept of the 'spiritual' or 'religious' life separate from everyday business, social and family dealings. The context for the life of faith is not some romance otherworld but the actual world of the reader's (and author's) experience. The body of theological writing by Puritan ministers is homiletic, moral and casuistical, rather than systematic or metaphysical, concerned with advising on the actual challenges faced by believers. The fate of over-confident Ignorance trusting to his good intentions and works in *The Pilgrim's Progress* should not blind us to Christian's assertion in discrediting Talkative that 'The Soul of Religion is the practick part' (*PP*, p. 79). 'It was never the will of God that bare *speculation* should be the end of his *Revelation* or of our *belief*. Divinity is an *Affective practical Science*', asserted Baxter.²⁹ The Puritan classics are exercises in what we would now call psychological analysis and counselling, remarkable for their clear-sighted address to fallible human nature and the conditions of human life. It is to this that *The Pilgrim's Progress* owes the circumstantial accuracy of its realism.

The preoccupations of Milton's great poems chime exactly with this Puritan bias. For all the grandeur and universal scale of *Paradise Lost*, at its centre lies a peculiarly humdrum and domestic Eden where Adam and Eve eat, drink, do a little gardening and make love. This is not otherworldly perfection but the perfection of the world of the reader's everyday experience. Ordinarity is essential to Milton's conception of Eden. Marriage is a condition of this ordinarity. Milton's hero, Adam, is, like Bunyan's Christian, a married man. In contrast to the conventions of medieval fiction, marriage, and love within marriage, for the first time become standard literary expectations in Puritan writing, in for example the poetry of Spenser and Anne Bradstreet, as well as in Milton. Still more striking, and in contrast to the traditional masculinist notion of heroism, the Puritan ideal is not gender specific. It is true that misogyny is no less in evidence within Puritanism than within other cultural traditions, but what is remarkable is the strength of the contrary tendency. *Paradise Lost* presents the creation of Eve not as an

afterthought but as the completion and perfection of a paradise in which, without her, Adam is discontent: 'In solitude/ What happiness . . .?' (VIII. 364–5). This had been the view of the early Puritans' preferred Bible, the Geneva translation of 1560, which glossed Genesis 2:22 with the comment 'mankind was perfect when the woman was created, that was before like an imperfect building'. Puritan writings have no patience with Roman Catholic notions of asceticism and abstinence. 'Who bids abstain/ But our destroyer, foe to God and man?' asks the narrator in *Paradise Lost* (IV. 748–9) and in just this vein Lucy Hutchinson is wonderfully scornful of the 'superstitious prince' Edward the Confessor 'who was sainted for his ungodly chastity'.³⁰ Accepting the legitimacy of human sexuality, Puritan writing locates human happiness in loving relations between men and women, the 'sum of earthly bliss' (*PL*, VIII. 522). This is the cultural context for Milton's moving wedding hymn for Adam and Eve (IV. 750–73), and for the poem's celebration of the experience of Adam and Eve 'Imparadised in one another's arms' as 'The happier Eden' (IV. 506–7).

So it is that, unexpectedly but not absurdly, *Paradise Lost* can be claimed as our first novel: it concerns a marriage which hits a sticky patch but pulls through in the end. Just this description would fit that other claimant to the title: *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The final image of the poem is of a man and a wife restored to each other. Milton's epic culminates not in the judgemental image of the 'brandished sword' but in the scene of Adam and Eve walking together, 'hand in hand', to encounter the world beyond Eden, 'and Providence their guide' (XII. 633, 648).

Notes

1. J. Barnard, D. F. McKenzie and M. Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. IV, 1557–1695 (Cambridge, 2002), chs. 1, 2 and 26 (especially pp. 557–67), and appendix 1; also I. Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 13–14 and appendix 1.
2. These figures derive from D. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books . . . 1641–1700*, 2nd edn rev. and enlarged, 3 vols. (New York, 1988–98), and from Green, *Print and Protestantism*, appendix 1, which explains (pp. 591–2) why they cannot be exact.
3. Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (London, 1673), I. 60, II. 580; *True Christianity* (London, 1655), fol. A4^v. See on this N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity* (Leicester, 1987), pp. 78–92.
4. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford, 1962), p. 1 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *GA*).
5. J. Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603–1689* (London, 1998), p. 151.

6. Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 26; D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), esp. pp. 72–5.
7. Baxter, *Christian Directory*, II. 580.
8. Baxter, *True Christianity*, p. 120. See T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991); M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981); Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 445–502.
9. See further S. Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, 1994).
10. Barnard, McKenzie and Bell, *Book in Britain*, IV, 1557–1695, pp. 70–5; *Early Quaker Writings, 1650–1700*, ed. H. Barbour and A. Roberts, new edn (Wallingford, 2004).
11. N. Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1680* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 23–4.
12. On this see: F. Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476–1776* (Urbana, 1952); C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in his *Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1985), pp. 32–71; Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 91–126. Barnard, McKenzie and Bell, *Book in Britain*, IV, 1557–1695, pp. 560–7, is, however, deeply sceptical that censorship in fact inhibited the publishing industry.
13. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. R. Sharrock (Oxford, 1960), pp. 89–97 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *PP*). For readings of Milton and Bunyan in this way see C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977; rpt. London, 1979), pp. 404–10, 471–2, and *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 215–21, 243–50.
14. *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, ed. A. Patterson *et al.*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 2003), I. 4–6, II. 51–2, 56.
15. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), pp. 118–21, 391–6; P. Gregg, *Freeborn John: A Biography of John Lilburne* (1961; rpt. London, 1986), esp. chs. 9, 11 and 12; L. Rostenberg, *The Minority Press* (New York, 1971); R. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil* (New York, 1986), pp. 207–25, and *Enemies Under His Feet* (Stanford, 1990), pp. 167–90.
16. *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. D. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven, 1953–82), II. 560 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *CPW*).
17. *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, gen. ed. R. Sharrock, 13 vols. (Oxford, 1976–94), I. 345; II. 16; VIII. 51 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *MW*).
18. On the practice and its literature see G. F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660* (1957; rpt. Oswestry, 2001), esp. pp. 109–16; P. Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge, 1983).
19. On the Puritan habit of diary-keeping and its consequent autobiographical literature, see N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 132–43.

20. O. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London, 1972); D.B. Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005).
21. See G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, 1965).
22. For discussions of Puritan style see: Keeble, *Baxter*, pp. 48–68; Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 240–62; L. A. Sasek, *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans* (New York, 1961).
23. B. P. Stranahan, 'Bunyan and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Studies in Philology*, 79 (1982), 279–96.
24. Edward Taylor, 'The Joy of Church Fellowship rightly attended', 1. 4, in *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. D. E. Stanford, 2nd abridged edn (New Haven, 1963), p. 334.
25. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702), 1. 6 §3.
26. Anne Bradstreet, *The Works*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA, 1967), p. 283.
27. N. H. Keeble, 'Wilderness exercises: adversity, temptation and trial in *Paradise Regained*', *Milton Studies*, 42 (2003), 86–105.
28. W. Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938; rpt. New York, 1957), pp. 49–82; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 125–30; T. Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997); J. Eales, 'A Road to Revolution: The Continuity of Puritanism, 1559–1642', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (London, 1996), pp. 184–209.
29. Baxter, *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians* (London, 1669), pt. 1. 97–8.
30. Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London, 1995), p. 5.

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19 Puritan legacies

JOHN COFFEY

Puritanism has been credited (and blamed) for bequeathing a puzzling set of legacies, including the spirit of capitalism, scientific enterprise, Anglo-Saxon sexual repression, companionate marriage, liberal democracy, American exceptionalism and religious bigotry. Puritans have been hailed as midwives of modernity, and censured as reactionary foes of enlightened values. In the first half of this chapter, I want to introduce some of the grand theories about Puritanism and modernity, explaining how they have generated vigorous but inconclusive debate. In the second half, I will point to an alternative way of exploring the Puritan legacy, one that studies the reception and uses of Puritan religious texts from the eighteenth century onwards, and asks how later generations remembered and represented seventeenth-century Puritanism.

PURITANISM AND MODERNITY

It is now more than a century since Max Weber published his seminal essay, 'Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus' (1904–5), translated into English by Talcott Parsons as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). Weber's general claim was that cultural factors play a significant role in economic development; his specific claim was that the predestinarian doctrines of the English Puritans fostered a 'Protestant ethic' that produced 'the spirit of capitalism' and contributed to the economic dynamism of England and the United States.

'The Weber thesis', as it came to be known, generated 'the longest-running debate in modern social science'.¹ Weber's defenders, such as the Harvard economic historian David Landes, maintain that 'culture makes almost all the difference' when it comes to the wealth and poverty of nations.² But they emphasise that Weber had no intention of replacing a purely materialist explanation for the rise of capitalism with a purely idealist one. He did maintain that the cultural factor

played an essential part in the birth of the capitalist spirit, and that 'the Puritan philosophy of life . . . stood at the cradle of the modern economic man'.³

His subtle and ingenious argument turned on the psychological effects of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Weber correctly observed that Puritan preoccupation with God's eternal decrees engendered intense anxiety about the individual's elect status. He then argued that the godly sought assurance of salvation by living industrious, scrupulous and productive lives, saving and investing their earnings, and finding evidence of divine favour in their business success. Calvinist doctrine produced spiritual angst which bred 'this-worldly asceticism' which in turn nurtured 'the spirit of capitalism'.

These specific claims have divided students of Calvinism and Puritanism.⁴ Some have been broadly convinced, and have defended and elaborated Weber's historical sociology of Puritan religion. One enterprising social scientist even sought to vindicate the Weber thesis on the unpromising ground of seventeenth-century Calvinist Scotland.⁵ A number of English historians rejected important elements of the Weber thesis, but retained the link between Puritanism and capitalism. The Christian socialist R.H. Tawney maintained that in the course of the seventeenth century, Puritans opened the way for rapacious capitalism by privatising their piety and giving up on 'Holy Commonwealths' that could regulate economic practice. Marxists like Christopher Hill inverted Weber by seeing economic change as the motor of ideological developments, but they also depicted Puritanism as the religion of the industrious middling sorts.⁶ More recently, the American historian Stephen Innes has made a vigorous neo-Weberian case for the decisive role of the Protestant ethic in the growth of New England's market economy.⁷

However, most economic historians seem perfectly capable of accounting for the early modern transition to capitalism without any reference to Weber, and those who do address his thesis typically consider it only to dismiss it.⁸ Weber's contrast between Protestant dynamism and Catholic stagnation is now considered overdrawn. His argument about Calvinism, which turned on the unintentional consequences of predestinarian doctrine, has not proved easily testable. Even if one could observe predestinarian anxiety and entrepreneurial success in the same persons, how could one demonstrate that the connection between the two was causal rather than merely contingent? Weber himself offered little in the way of hard evidence – his grand thesis was erected on a small sample of Puritan sources.

Detailed case studies have cast doubt on the capitalist credentials of the godly. The London woodturner Nehemiah Wallington was a devout Puritan but not in the Weberian mould. His passion for spiritual things distracted him from business affairs, for which he showed little aptitude, and he never seems to have sought assurance in material success. The New England merchant Robert Keayne fits the model much better, but his Calvinist congregation formally rebuked him for charging unfair prices. In Winthrop's New England, the Puritan belief in a disciplined moral community arguably inhibited the development of a free market economy. The Presbyterian divine Richard Baxter, one of Weber and Tawney's key witnesses, was in fact fierce in his denunciation of economic exploitation, leading one historian to call him 'a seventeenth-century Tawney'.⁹ Such examples are not unanswerable, but if the Weber thesis is still alive, it is looking less healthy than it used to.

Despite its weaknesses, Weber's famous text launched a thousand enquiries about Protestantism and modernisation.¹⁰ For the American sociologist Robert Merton, writing in the 1930s, Puritan ideology provided a vital motive force behind the new science, leading Puritans to play a disproportionate role in the scientific enterprises of seventeenth-century England. Merton's Puritan thesis attracted significant support from historians, including Christopher Hill. It also inspired the pioneering research of Charles Webster, who unearthed the labours of Samuel Hartlib's circle from the 1630s to the 1650s, emphasising their eschatological confidence in a 'great instauration' of new knowledge in the last days.¹¹

In the long run, however, the specifics of the Merton thesis have not worn well, even if his 'externalist' approach to the history of science is now widely imitated. He defined Puritanism so loosely that the term embraced almost all sincere English Protestants. Further research into the early Royal Society suggested that there was a greater correlation between the new science and religious moderation – figures like Robert Boyle and John Wilkins had many Puritan connections (Wilkins married Cromwell's youngest sister), but they were latitudinarian by the 1660s, and early modern science was an ecumenical project. Major Puritan institutions like Emmanuel College, Cambridge and New England's Harvard College were renowned for their religious output, not for their contributions to natural philosophy. Some Puritans did throw themselves into the new science, but most were indifferent, and there seems no good reason to accord Puritanism any special significance in England's scientific revolution.¹²

If Weber and Merton generated the hottest debates, subsequent modernity theorists also assigned important roles to Puritanism. The political scientist Michael Walzer, though sceptical of the claims of Weber and Merton, suggested that the Puritan parliamentarians were the archetypal modern revolutionaries – forerunners of the Jacobins and the Bolsheviks. The literary critic Ian Watt cited Weber and invoked the Puritans' introspective individualism in his account of the rise of the English novel. The philosopher Charles Taylor argued that Puritanism – with its positive theology of work and marriage – contributed to the modern 'affirmation of ordinary life'. Edmund Leites found the origins of modern sexuality in the Puritan call for a lifelong integration of sensuality, purity and constancy within marriage.¹³

Such theorists were not alone in allotting Puritans a key role in the drama of modernisation, for Whig historians had done the same. Since the eighteenth century, Dissenters had depicted the Puritans as heroes of freedom.¹⁴ In subtler fashion, the great Victorian historian S. R. Gardiner had emphasised the advance of liberty in his account of 'the Puritan Revolution', and a distinguished group of American scholars (mainly Miltonists) took up where Gardiner had left off. Writing against the backdrop of European Fascism, these authors identified radical Puritans as among the earliest champions of toleration, equality and liberty. John Milton, Roger Williams and John Lilburne were hailed as progressives. The gathered church was presented as a laboratory of political democracy, in which the godly pioneered forms of debate, deliberation and decision-making that were subsequently transferred to the political arena. 'The Puritan Revolution' was depicted as a seedbed of modern liberal democratic politics.¹⁵

Scholars like Woodhouse, Haller and Wolfe did much to advance the study of Milton and the Levellers, but their Whiggish reading of Puritanism fell out of favour in the later twentieth century. Revisionist historians argued that they were guilty of anachronism, projecting modern liberal values back into a pre-liberal age. The Whig interpretation had underestimated the limits of Miltonic tolerance and Leveller democracy, and the consuming Puritan passion for godly rule. The English Revolution, far from being the first modern revolution, was (if anything) the last of the European wars of religion. Its greatest legacy lay in the reaction it provoked and the divisions it engendered. The Restoration restored episcopacy, monarchy, aristocracy and traditional festive culture, and the English ruling class acquired a lasting dislike of enthusiasm, cant and millenarian politics.¹⁶ For generations to come,

English political culture would be shaped by bitter memories of the Civil War and by the rivalry between Church and Dissent.

In stressing the atavistic character and divisive effects of the Revolution, revisionists perhaps underplayed its constructive and innovative dimensions. By derailing Charles I's Personal Rule, the godly revived the fortunes of parliament and participated in an unprecedented surge of radical political thought. Milton, the Levellers and tolerationists like John Goodwin developed Protestant thought in new directions, preparing the ground for the radical Whig politics of eighteenth-century Dissent.¹⁷ Yet these radical Puritans were hardly typical – the mainstream godly retained a more traditional vision of politics, and opposed new-fangled ideas about civil and religious liberty.

Whilst grand theories about Puritanism and modernity have generally focused on English Puritanism, there has also been a vigorous search for the Puritan roots of American identity. Alexis De Tocqueville found in New England's Puritan settlers the fusion of twin passions – the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion – that set America apart from his native France.¹⁸ Perry Miller was more circumspect, observing that 'the Puritans are frequently praised or blamed for qualities which never belonged to them or for ideas which originated only among their successors and which they themselves would have disowned'. But he agreed that Puritanism had shaped national identity: 'Without some understanding of Puritanism, it may safely be said, there is no understanding of America.'¹⁹

Accordingly, books on the Puritan legacy in America abound. Various writers have argued that the American sense of exceptionalism, mission and national destiny has its origins in the New England Puritans. For Richard Slotkin, the Puritans' assurance of election bequeathed a lethal legacy of contempt for 'the other' together with a myth of redemptive violence. A Jesuit scholar has suggested that the prominence of horror in American fiction and film is a legacy of the Puritan fear of satanic attack and divine vengeance. Others insist that Puritanism lumbered Americans (and Anglo-Saxons more generally) with 'puritanical' attitudes to sex. Most recently, the Puritans have even been credited with inventing American managerial culture.²⁰

The most sustained argument for a Puritan legacy in American politics is mounted by James Morone in his book *Hellfire Nation*. By starting his narrative in Massachusetts in 1630, rather than in Philadelphia in 1776, Morone presents a picture of American politics not dominated by liberal individualism or secular republicanism but by

'great bouts of moral fervour'. The Puritans, he maintains, 'founded American moral politics', though their legacy is an ambivalent one. On the one hand, they bequeathed to subsequent generations a noble sense of corporate mission, the drive to create a city on a hill. On the other hand, Puritans promoted a politics of exclusion by demonising foes who threatened the godly community – heretics, heathens and witches. In different ways, these Puritan impulses fed into the abolitionist movement, nativist anti-Catholicism, Victorian campaigns against smut and prostitution, the temperance and prohibition crusades, the social gospel and the New Deal, anti-communism, the civil rights movement, the war on drugs, the anti-abortion crusade and the Lewinsky scandal. Americans, he concludes, are not merely 'a shopping nation ... we remain Puritans all'.²¹

Such bold claims about the Puritan legacy force historians to consider the wider impact of Puritan religion on Anglo-American culture. The arguments of modernity theorists have drawn attention to distinctive individuals like Robert Keayne, Samuel Hartlib and Roger Williams. But whilst being suggestive and provocative, they have proved problematic. It is noticeable that, for the most part, sweeping claims about the Puritan legacy have not been made by historians. Instead, they have been advanced by sociologists, political scientists, literary critics, media commentators or public intellectuals. While some of these writers were immensely erudite, others displayed a rather superficial acquaintance with Puritan sources. Speculations about the Puritan legacy were often conceptually flawed and evidentially underdetermined. Such theories were based on the plausible contention that religion is not a hermetically sealed compartment, but one which has 'spillover effects' in other spheres of human activity, including politics, economics and culture. Yet the abstractions discussed were grand and ill-defined ('Puritanism', 'capitalism', 'modernity' etc), and it proved difficult to isolate the religious factor and assess its relative importance alongside a multiplicity of other significant forces.²²

Moreover, by focusing attention on the secular by-products of Puritanism, the grand theorists have tended to distract us from its religious legacy. A. G. Dickens once wrote that 'When we have finished our efforts to modernise and secularise Puritanism, it remains an obstinately religious phenomenon.'²³ Yet modernisation theorists have been less interested in Puritan religion than in its possible side effects. C. H. George had a point when he complained of 'the alchemistic tricks' of historians who 'transmute the base stuff of puritan piety into the gold of egalitarianism, individual liberty and tolerance'.²⁴ In the second half

of this chapter, I aim to refocus attention on the religious legacy of the Puritans, by discussing the transmission, reception and use of Puritan writings in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and observing how the 'memory' of the Puritans was kept alive long after their demise. This can be no more than a preliminary sketch, but it will highlight an area that cries out for further research.

RECEPTION AND REPUTATION

Before investigating the afterlife of Puritanism, we need to discuss the date of our subject's demise. Historians of English Puritanism tend to focus on the transition from 'Puritanism' to 'Dissent', or from 'Puritanism' to 'Whiggism'. The end date typically comes in 1689, when the Act of Toleration drew the curtain on the heroic age of Puritanism, and ushered in the rather more prosaic era of Protestant Nonconformity. In New England, things are a little different, for here the story of Puritanism normally carries on to around 1730. By this date, we are told, 'Puritans' were turning into 'Yankees', and 'Puritanism' was being displaced by 'Evangelicalism'.

These historical categories sound clear-cut, but the reality is rather blurred. Among the candidates for the honorific title 'last of the Puritans' are Matthew Henry, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, the Victorian Baptist Charles Haddon Spurgeon and (in the twentieth century) the Welsh preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Significantly, all of them were members of Dissenting churches, a useful reminder of the Puritans' ecclesiastical legacy. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most English Dissenters worshipped in denominations that could trace their roots back to Puritanism – Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quakers, Particular and General Baptists all celebrated their seventeenth-century forebears, and kept alive their historical memory. In North America too, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Quakers retained a significant presence well into the modern era, with the Baptists eventually becoming the nation's largest Protestant grouping.

The 'last of the Puritans' listed above were also defenders of Calvinist doctrine. Although the predestinarian theology associated with Puritanism was gradually marginalised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we should not underestimate its tenacity. As Brooks Holifield explains, 'a substantial part of the history of theology in early America was an extended debate, stretching over more than two centuries [i.e. till around 1850], about the meaning and the truth of

Calvinism'.²⁵ Crucial to the persistence of Calvinism were the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly during the 1640s, especially the Confession of Faith and Catechisms. As the official standards of English-speaking Presbyterianism, and a major point of reference for many Congregationalists and Baptists too, the Westminster texts instilled Reformed orthodoxy (even if reservations about them sparked heated debates about subscription). Moreover, for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the heavy doctrinal tomes of Puritan theologians were widely read by clergy in England, Scotland, Ireland and North America. Writings by John Owen, the ablest of the Puritan high Calvinists, were republished on numerous occasions in the eighteenth century, in London, Sheffield, Coventry, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Belfast and other towns. Owen's strict Calvinism, of course, had not gone unchallenged within seventeenth-century Puritanism, and later Evangelicals could also draw on the alternative theological visions of Puritans such as Richard Baxter, the antinomian Tobias Crisp or the Arminian John Goodwin, whose writings were republished by the Wesleyan Methodists.²⁶ Puritan theological controversies had a tendency to resurface in later centuries.

If the doctrine of the Puritans was effectively transmitted to later generations, so was their piety (indeed the two were closely linked). Among the key figures here was Isaac Watts, Independent pastor and hymnwriter extraordinaire. Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707) was one of the most popular and influential books of the eighteenth century, and it mediated the affective piety of the Puritan tradition to later Protestants, especially Evangelicals. Baxter's works were also widely republished – his *Call to the Unconverted* went through numerous editions in the course of the eighteenth century and was (like his *Saints Everlasting Rest*) translated into Welsh by the Calvinistic Methodists. Even more important was John Bunyan. By 1789, *Pilgrim's Progress* was in its fifty-seventh English edition, and Protestant missionaries went on to make it one of the world's bestselling books. Translated into 30 European languages, and about 130 non-European tongues, Bunyan's classic would mould the piety of millions of evangelical Protestants around the globe. Of course, Bunyan was never the sole property of his core constituency – read in contexts far removed from that of its author, *Pilgrim's Progress* would fire the imagination of an astounding array of readers, from the Russian poet Pushkin to the man who led China's catastrophic Taiping rebellion.²⁷

Yet the role of Puritan texts in promoting evangelical piety needs to be underlined. Puritan practical divinity (recognised in its own day as

a distinctively English speciality) was to be one of the major sources feeding later Pietism and Evangelicalism. Dutch Reformed Pietists were avid consumers of British devotional writings – Bayly, Sibbes, Baxter and Bunyan were especially popular. In Germany, Scandinavia and Switzerland too, these writers and others were frequently published and republished during the critical phase of Pietism between 1660 and 1720, reaching a Lutheran as well as a Reformed audience, in what Hans Leube called ‘the victory march of English devotional literature in the Lutheran church’.²⁸ According to one recent study, ‘the characteristic language of Pietism resulted from translations of Puritan works’.²⁹

The leading Calvinist preachers of the Evangelical Revival consciously revived the doctrine and piety of the Puritans. The New Englander Jonathan Edwards has been described as ‘first and last a Puritan theologian’.³⁰ The Presbyterian Samuel Davies noted that before the revival, awakening had come ‘on reading some Authors of the last Century, particularly Bolton, Baxter, Flavel, Bunyan’.³¹ During the early years of his fame as a revivalist, the Anglican George Whitefield was reading Bunyan, Matthew Henry, Isaac Watts’s hymns and Daniel Neal’s *History of the Puritans* (1732–8). By 1741, he hoped to see ‘the spirit of scriptural *Puritanism* universally prevail’, and confessed (admittedly to a New Englander) ‘I am more and more in love with the *good old Puritans*’.³² John Wesley, who held on to the Arminianism of his High Church father, had more eclectic spiritual tastes, but he too drew on Puritan influences, editing and republishing many Puritan works in his *Christian Library* (while carefully excising dubious predestinarian doctrine).³³ Other Evangelicals edited similar anthologies with many extracts from Puritan works.³⁴ And Evangelical publishers, like the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, founded in 1750, distributed thousands of copies of seventeenth-century nonconformist texts by writers like Baxter, Alleine, James Janeway and Henry Scudder.³⁵

Although they denied the charge of ‘enthusiasm’, the revivalists effectively rehabilitated Puritan zeal, as Anglican critics of Evangelicalism were keen to point out. William Warburton complained of ‘the old Puritan fanaticism revived under the new name of Methodism’. Horace Walpole feared that the New Light was ‘a revival of all the folly and cant of the last age’ (i.e. the seventeenth century). James Hervey had to tell his fellow Evangelicals, ‘Be not ashamed of the name Puritan’.³⁶ Puritanism lived on in the eighteenth-century equivalents of ‘the hotter sort of Protestant’.

But the revival also divided the heirs of the Puritans, both Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Some of the anti-revivalists, like the English Presbyterians and the New England Arminians and Unitarians, rejected classic Calvinist divinity, but they were keen to uphold elements of the mainstream Puritan legacy – especially its intellectualism – against the populism and emotionalism of the Great Awakening. This is why Perry Miller once remarked that ‘Unitarianism is as much the child of Puritanism as Methodism.’³⁷ Others – like the ‘gentle Puritan’ Ezra Stiles, President of Yale – aimed to conserve the sober evangelical doctrine of ‘the good old Puritans’ while eschewing vehemence.³⁸ The revivalists themselves worked hard to show that they were the true heirs of the Puritans. As Charles Hambrick-Stowe explains, ‘To New Light clergy, the Great Awakening at its best vindicated what we would call “old time religion”, basic seventeenth-century Puritan principles and spirituality.’ The American revivalists republished ‘an astonishing number’ of Puritan devotional classics, such as Joseph Alleine’s *Alarm to the Unconverted*. The Awakening was ‘a revival of religion’, fuelled in part by seventeenth-century devotional tracts.³⁹

Despite their differences, New Lights and their Old Light critics united to fight the British during the American Revolution. Congregationalists in New England and Presbyterians in the Middle Colonies were among the most fervent supporters of the rebellion. The political sermons of the ‘black regiment’ of Reformed clergy often deployed the same texts and arguments as their Parliamentary predecessors, and at times the Patriot cause was even presented as a sequel to the Puritan revolt. Loyalists bitterly recalled the subversion of Presbyterians and ‘republican sectaries’ in the 1640s, while Patriots praised Puritan revolutionaries. The American Revolution may have been an essentially secular affair, but the revolutionaries also drew on the politics of memory and religion. Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists were inclined to back the revolution because of their Dissenting traditions and Puritan heritage.⁴⁰

Yet it was in the nineteenth century that the reputation of the Puritans flourished as never before. In Britain, according to Raphael Samuel, ‘the years from 1820 to 1920 might fairly be described as Bunyan’s century’. Bunyan was canonised by Coleridge and other poets; ‘Milton the Puritan’ was rediscovered; and Carlyle depicted Cromwell as a hero. From the 1860s, Milton Roads and Cromwell Streets started to proliferate across English towns and cities. Political memories of ‘the Puritan Revolution’, constructed by historians like Carlyle and Gardiner, shaped popular politics. Nonconformist radicals lionised the

Puritan revolutionaries. Cromwell was one of the four politicians whose portraits adorned the membership card of the National Liberal League. Liberal election songs featured Cromwell, Milton and Algernon Sydney.⁴¹ Evangelicalism had now become firmly established as a powerful cultural force in both Britain and America, and there was buoyant demand for the classics of Puritan devotional literature. British publishers printed the complete works of seventeenth-century godly divines: Sibbes (7 vols.), Baxter (23 vols.), Owen (24 vols.), Bunyan (4 vols.), Thomas Manton (22 vols.), Thomas Goodwin (12 vols.), Thomas Brooks (6 vols.), John Howe (6 vols.), John Flavel (6 vols.), Edward Reynolds (6 vols.), William Bridge (5 vols.), George Swinnock (4 vols.) and David Clarkson (3 vols.).

Theorists of the Puritan legacy have tended to overlook the longevity and persistent popularity of the zealous evangelical religion that Puritans did so much to promote. They have been inclined to think of Puritan religion as a kind of booster rocket that propelled the spacecraft (of capitalism or democracy or American national identity) into orbit and then fell away once its job was done. Yet Puritan texts helped to feed revivals of hot Protestantism in the eighteenth century and beyond. It is precisely because Puritanism never really died out, precisely because much that counted as Puritanism was subsumed and perpetuated within the broader evangelical Protestant tradition, that Puritan ideals of strenuous godliness and moral discipline retained much of their vitality during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dissenters and Evangelicals were the prime carriers of elements of the Puritan ethos into the modern era through their churches, Sunday Schools, publishing houses, missionary societies, voluntary associations and moral reform campaigns.

Max Weber, of course, was well aware of the enduring vitality of what he called 'ascetic Protestantism', especially after his visit to the United States in 1904.⁴² Nineteenth-century America had been swept by successive waves of revival, and though much of popular Evangelicalism was both Arminian and anti-intellectual, there was still a market for Puritan classics. Evangelical publishers like the American Tract Society reprinted numerous titles by both English Puritans and their New England counterparts. Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* were each republished more than a dozen times, with most of the editions appearing at the height of the Second Great Awakening during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The hymns of Watts were sung by millions.

However, the reception and uses of 'Puritanism' varied by region. In the antebellum South, Baxter and Bunyan were widely read, but white Southerners were ambivalent about the Puritans, admiring their godly virtue, but censuring them as progenitors of politically militant, holier-than-thou Northern abolitionists.⁴³ In New England, by contrast, Protestants promoted a filiopietist interpretation of their region's past. 'Pilgrims' and 'Puritans' were invoked to fortify ideas of national mission, American liberty and anti-slavery. As Thanksgiving became an increasingly important national holiday, the story of the Pilgrim Fathers assumed the status of a foundational myth. In a striking case of the invention of tradition, Whig politicians praised the Mayflower Compact as a great constitutional document, and Plymouth Rock became a place of pilgrimage.⁴⁴

For all their fame, the Puritans' religious legacy was being eroded on both sides of the Atlantic by theological liberalism and secularisation. The New England intellectuals who celebrated their Puritan forebears had broken with evangelical Protestantism. New England writers – like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton and T. S. Eliot – wrestled with their Puritan inheritance, but even when they retained Puritan traits their intellectual outlook was far removed from that of seventeenth-century Calvinism.⁴⁵ Alleine's *Alarm* and Baxter's *Call*, which had gone through numerous editions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were largely forgotten in the period between 1900 and 1950. In 1920s America, reactionary fundamentalists were the public face of conservative Protestantism, and (in the words of Michael Kammen) 'Puritan bashing became a popular national pastime'. H. L. Mencken famously defined Puritanism as 'the haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy'.⁴⁶ From the 1940s onwards, secular scholars like Perry Miller rehabilitated the original Puritans as serious intellectuals, distancing them from ill-educated fundamentalists and holy-rollers, but their popular image was more profoundly shaped by Arthur Miller's great play about the Salem witch trials, *The Crucible* (1953).

Although Evangelicalism continued to thrive in America in the face of secularisation, it was now a largely populist movement with little taste for the weighty tomes of seventeenth-century divines. Tens of millions of Americans worshipped in Evangelical churches, but only a tiny percentage were familiar with the Westminster Shorter Catechism or with any Puritan work besides *Pilgrim's Progress*. In many ways, Evangelicals were the Puritans' heirs, but much had changed since the

1730s. Millenarianism was alive and well, but now centred on 'the Rapture', a doctrine unknown to Puritans that first emerged in the nineteenth century. Megachurches and Christian pop music thrived; sabbatarianism and psalm-singing had almost vanished.

Yet the second half of the twentieth century did witness a quiet but steady revival of traditional Calvinism. Disturbed by new religious and secular trends, some British Evangelicals in the 1950s set about renovating the old paths. Led initially by the Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones and the Anglican scholar J.I. Packer, they organised an annual 'Puritan Conference' in London and set up a publishing house, uncompromisingly named *The Banner of Truth*.⁴⁷ Over the next fifty years, *The Banner* would republish hundreds of Puritan titles, and even issue a series of abridged 'Puritan paperbacks' for readers with less time on their hands. In constructing a new Puritan canon, they stuck to a staunchly conservative agenda, eschewing radical Puritanism and omitting anything that strayed from the path of orthodox Calvinism. Their catalogue had no space for the polemical theology of Richard Baxter, John Goodwin or Tobias Crisp; the prophecies of Anna Trapnel; the works of John Milton or Roger Williams; or anything by General Baptists. Yet the publisher was clearly meeting and feeding a significant demand for Puritan writings. Its two-volume edition of the works of Jonathan Edwards, one of the 'last of the Puritans', was selling at the rate of 20,000 copies per year.⁴⁸

By the early twenty-first century, great quantities of Puritan writing were available in print and on Christian websites.⁴⁹ In conservative Reformed seminaries, the theological and devotional works of the Puritans were being read as avidly as ever, and in the United States there were clear signs of Calvinist resurgence.⁵⁰ Clergy serving thirty million Presbyterians around the world (including nine million in South Korea) were usually required to adhere in some fashion to the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith. Within an Anglican communion torn apart by the controversy over gay clergy, the name 'Puritan' was recycled as a term of abuse by liberals angered at conservative Evangelicals. The Evangelical archbishop of Sydney even wrote an article ('On being called bad names'), in which he defended the original Puritans against their critics.⁵¹

Indeed, with the rise of the American Religious Right, Puritan bashing once again became a popular sport. The re-election of George W. Bush in 2004 provoked fears that the Christian Right was out to 'repeal the Enlightenment' and recreate 'a Puritan theocracy'. The split

between red states and blue states led some to claim there had always been two Americas: a godly America with roots that went back to Puritan New England, and a worldly America with origins in early Virginia or New Amsterdam or Thomas Morton's Merry Mount. These dichotomous historical genealogies simplified a complex past, making the questionable assumption that a straight line ran from John Winthrop to George W. Bush, and never stopping to explain why the Puritans' legacy should be sought in the South rather than in their native New England. The twists and turns of history were often overlooked by commentators who insisted that contemporary America (especially conservative Protestant America) could be simply explained by reference to its Puritan 'founders'.⁵²

Yet the United States remained a nation where evangelical Protestantism was still a major force not just a minority interest. In England, 'Bunyan's century' had been ended decisively by twentieth-century secularisation. In America, things were different. It is tempting to suggest that nowhere has the Puritan legacy been greater or more enduring than in the United States. For better or worse, concepts of covenant, chosen people, millennium and national mission remain alive within American culture. But such concepts ultimately derived from the Bible itself, a book read far more widely and intensively than all Puritan texts put together. Puritans no doubt helped to shape how modern Americans read the Bible, but so have later movements and traditions. We should be wary about attributing too much to the seventeenth century.

The persistent tendency to invoke 'Puritanism' as an explanatory tool illustrates the tenacious hold that the godly have exercised on the imagination of posterity. For generations after their passing, they have attracted pious readers and curious scholars convinced (for very different reasons) that Puritanism matters. But identifying the Puritan legacy is no easy matter. Puritanism has been made to carry heavy freight, and used to explain a host of phenomena that may owe relatively little to the hot Protestants of the seventeenth century. The grand 'spillover' theories of Weber and his followers have stimulated valuable research, but they remain controversial. It would be a mistake for historians to stop asking big questions about the impact of Puritanism on the culture of Britain and America. But answering them will involve thinking about how Puritans were read and remembered by later generations. And we should not overlook their most obvious legacy – ardent evangelical religion.

Notes

1. D. Little, 'The use and abuse of textual data', in H. Lehmann and G. Roth, eds., *Weber's 'Protestant Ethic': Origins, Evidence, Contexts* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 245.
2. D. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (New York, 1998); D. Landes, 'Culture makes almost all the difference', in L. Harrison and S. Huntingdon, eds., *Culture Matters* (New York, 2000), pp. 2–13.
3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism*, trans. P. Baehr and G. Wells (London, 2002), p. 117.
4. For an introduction to the vast literature see the essays in Lehmann and Roth, eds., *Weber's 'Protestant Ethic'*.
5. G. Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the Development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560–1707* (Oxford, 1980). See also the neo-Weberian studies of D. Little, *Religion, Order and Law: A Study in Pre-Revolutionary England* (New York, 1969), and D. Zaret, *The Heavenly Contract: Ideology and Organization in Pre-Revolutionary Puritanism* (Chicago, 1985).
6. R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1926); C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964); R. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1993).
7. S. Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York, 1995).
8. See R. S. Duplessis, *Transitions to Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 134–6; R. Lachman, *Capitalists in Spite of Themselves: Elite Conflict and European Transitions in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2000), esp. ch. 7.
9. See P. Seaver, 'The Puritan work ethic revisited', *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1980), 35–53; B. Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1955); M. Valeri, 'Puritans in the marketplace', in F. Bremer and L. Botelho, eds., *The World of John Winthrop* (Boston, 2005), pp. 147–86; W. Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy* (London, 1996), ch. 7, quotation at p. 128.
10. See S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (New York, 1968).
11. I.B. Cohen, ed., *Puritanism and the Rise of Modern Science: The Merton Thesis* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990); C. Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1965); C. Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (London, 1975); C. Webster, 'Puritanism, separatism and science', in D. Lindberg and R. Numbers, eds., *God and Nature* (Berkeley, 1986), ch. 7.
12. See J. Morgan, 'The Puritan thesis revisited', in D.N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart and M.A. Noll, eds., *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1999), ch. 2; M. Hunter, 'Scientific change: its setting and stimuli', in B. Coward, ed., *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Oxford, 2003), ch. 11; Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, ch. 9.

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20 The historiography of Puritanism

PETER LAKE

To review the historiography of Puritanism is to review the history of early modern England. The history of Puritanism started almost at the same moment as the emergence of Puritanism as a movement and a sensibility. The first history of the Elizabethan Puritan movement was published by Richard Bancroft in 1593.¹ Thereafter histories of Puritanism came thick and fast as both the enemies of the godly and the godly themselves strove to produce accounts of a 'Puritan' or 'sectarian' threat against which they could define their own position as the personification of the Protestant tradition or national church. During and after the English Civil War such efforts intensified. Peter Heylin wrote a history, if not of Puritanism, then of presbyterianism, and both his and John Hacket's biographies of Laud and Williams respectively were organised in part at least around different versions of the Puritan threat and how best to deal with it. Samuel Clarke's famous collections of Puritan lives – the first version of which was published in the early 1650s, to be reissued at the Restoration and again and again thereafter – can be read as replies to these and other attempts to cast 'Puritanism' as a threat to order.²

From the outset, then, histories of Puritanism were heavily ideological interventions in debates about the nature of the English church, Protestant orthodoxy and ecclesiastical, political and social order. The historiography of Puritanism from Bancroft or Hacket to Collinson, from Edwardes to Hill or Hughes, from Heylin to Tyacke is, therefore, the story of how various versions of the Church of England and its others have been used to define the discourse (and indeed to shape the practice and patronage networks) of the national church over the five hundred years since the Reformation. To tell that story is an enormous task, way beyond the compass of this chapter. But, as we shall see, the ghosts of these earlier debates haunt much of even the most recent writing on this subject. Only by acknowledging this complex historical legacy can the subsequent historiography of the subject be

understood and properly relativist histories of Puritanism be written hereafter.

The importance of Puritanism in English historiography stems not only from its close relationship to debates about the nature of the English church (or, in a more secularised vein, about the nature of Englishness), but also from the close association of the history of Puritanism with what we might term the history of modernity. The first version of this sort of narrative was concerned with politics and religion: with the history of religious and political 'liberty'; with the development of England into a limited monarchy; and with the rise of 'toleration' and, ultimately, with the emergence of parliamentary government. Religious politics still dominated the elite and popular political culture of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and these associations were given long-lasting scholarly form in the grand narratives of whig historiography. As Nicholas Tyacke has pointed out, as a tory millenarian S. R. Gardiner was scarcely a standard product of either nonconformity or whiggery, but the whig tradition did still shape Gardiner's political narratives in myriad ways.³ Many of the organising assumptions of whiggery persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century, when Sir John Neale could still use a notion of a Puritan opposition as the driving force behind his account of the parliamentary and political history of Elizabeth's reign and William Haller could be found equating 'the rise of Puritanism' with 'the way to the New Jerusalem as set forth in pulpit and press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton'.⁴

During the 1960s and 1970s 'Puritanism' played a central role in many other emergent modernisation narratives. Taking Gardiner and Neale's political stories as more or less read, these histories sought not only to investigate the social and economic roots of the political events described by Neale and Gardiner, but also to explicate the rise of various sorts of modernity. Puritanism was conceived as passing like a dose of salts through a variously configured traditional, feudal, pre-industrial or pre-revolutionary society, bringing with it a variety of social and economic, cultural and intellectual, forms and forces, all of them supposedly central to the emergence of 'modernity'. Such narratives were based on the great works of social theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; on Marx certainly, but also on Weber. Puritanism was thus seen as a major element in that 'disenchantment of the universe' that took place after the Reformation and presaged the Enlightenment; as the harbinger of the sort of 'work discipline' and 'social control' necessary for the emergence of the first capitalist

economy and the driving force of a bourgeois revolution; as integral to the emergence of modern science; as the harbinger of a distinctively modern style of revolutionary ideology and action; as a major force behind the rise both of possessive and of affective individualism and of companionate marriage, and thus of the modern 'self'.⁵

For the most part, the historians who used Puritanism to construct the grand narratives of modernity had a relentlessly secular outlook. This is not to suggest that these authors were altogether uninterested in theology or ignorant about Puritan thought. Far from it. It was just that they were not primarily interested in theology or piety, in religious thought and feeling, as subjects in their own right, but rather as codes and carriers for other forces and interests. On Christopher Hill's account, religion was the idiom of the age and thus it was not only legitimate but necessary for historians of the period to seek to decode that idiom in order to see what meanings lay within or beneath the ostensibly religious, indeed often theological, discourse of contemporaries.

On this basis, it would not be going too far to suggest that some of the most significant and distinguished of the modern historians of Puritanism – scholars who have perhaps done the most to put the subject at the very centre of historical debate and research – were not primarily interested in Puritan religion at all. But, be that as it may, this did not prevent at least some of these historians from producing work about Puritans and Puritanism of enduring distinction and importance. Here, of course, the most obvious example is Hill, who, first in *Puritanism and Society*, and then again in *The World Turned Upside Down*, wrote enormously influential accounts of different aspects of Puritanism. The first lies behind a great deal of the more recent Wrightsonian social history of the period; work which, while concerned with wider social and economic issues and narratives, still has a distinctly Hillian account of the social origins and effects of Puritan religion somewhere close to its heart.⁶ Again, in *The World Turned Upside Down*, Hill's concerns were largely secular. He wanted to identify the true radicals in order to understand the internal dynamics of the second English revolution that failed. He also wanted to delineate a strand of radical religion and social/political critique that was genuinely plebeian in its origins and locale, and thus to identify a form of Puritanism antipathetic to the controlling Calvinist predestinarianism – the deadening discipline and 'social control' of the religion of 'the middling sort' – that he took mainstream Puritanism to be. Though the main emphases of the book were sociological and 'political' rather than theological, Hill still managed to expose an entire range of radical

religious thought and argument that had hitherto been overlooked by most mainstream historians both of Puritan religion and of the English revolution.⁷

But books that used Puritans to talk about something else – what we might term extrinsic histories of Puritanism – were not the only sorts of book written on the subject. There was another altogether distinct, what we might call an intrinsic, school of writing that was almost entirely concerned with Puritan religion and Puritan theology. In many ways this strand of enquiry represented the continuation in modern historical scholarship of long-standing traditions of ecclesiastical history. The people writing these books tended to see themselves as members of living traditions of thought and feeling, indeed very often of visible churches, that linked them with the people they were studying. They approached their subjects with the familiarity of fellow believers and with all the self-confident assurance of sympathy and insight that such a sense of ideological belonging confers. For such authors the past was most definitely not another country.

At times this intrinsic approach produced just as much anachronism as the extrinsic one, as historians translated the doctrinal and devotional concerns of the early modern period into the technical language of modern systematic theology, reading 'great books' and constructing theological traditions across the centuries in what sometimes appear to the outsider to be worryingly a- or un-historical ways.⁸ But at times this approach produced works of extraordinary insight. Armed with a very similar range of technical skills and concerns as the people whom they were studying, and in no doubt that the theological issues at stake in the early modern period both mattered at the time and spoke to questions of pressing concern in the present, some historians were able simultaneously both to understand from within – that is to say both emotionally and intellectually to re-inhabit – and to analyse and categorise from without, the beliefs and arguments of the early modern period. Outstanding here is the work of Geoffrey Nuttall in general, and, in particular, his great book on *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*. Concerned to relate the emergence of Quakerism to major currents within mainstream Puritanism, Nuttall wore his theological heart on his sleeve with much the same openness that Hill avowed his Marxism and it remains a nice question as to which of the two scholars' work has worn the better.⁹

On the face of it, the extrinsic and intrinsic schools were very different. So different, in fact, that they seldom directly addressed one another's concerns or claims. But they did, in fact, share certain

structural similarities. Both schools sought to identify in Puritanism the origins of issues about which they cared deeply, issues integral to their own identity. In the extrinsic school what was at stake were certain aspects of modernity to which the almost entirely secular-minded scholars of that school were entirely committed; in the intrinsic school what was at stake were certain religious beliefs and experiences, ecclesiological traditions and denominational identities. For the denizens of both schools, therefore, Puritanism itself was not, indeed could never be, a problem. Both were committed to the existence of Puritanism as a distinctive ideological/theological, social, political and cultural entity; a coherent and discrete object of study obviously separate and easily distinguishable, both at the time and now, from the surrounding religious, political and ideological terrain.

To put it another way, both schools believed not only in Puritanism but also in Anglicanism. Those committed to the purity and distinctiveness of Puritanism had to have something to define it against, and they found it in the ideology and practice of the national church which it was Puritanism's destiny to oppose, to attempt to transform and, in its later incarnation as Dissent, finally, to leave. For those committed to a central role for Puritanism in the various accounts of modernisation at the heart of the extrinsic approach, how could devastating, world-historical effects be attributed to 'Puritanism', if 'Puritanism' were not a dynamic and distinctive force operating upon the (traditional, pre-industrial, pre-revolutionary, feudal) host society that it was in the process of transforming? For 'Puritanism' to be that distinctive it needed something to be distinctive from, and that was where Anglicanism came in.

The result was a tendency to search for distinctively Puritan theologies and attitudes; a tendency reinforced by the New England wing of Puritan studies, where, because everyone was always already Puritan, and at least about to become American, the notion of Puritan distinctiveness was never a problem. Indeed, entities like 'the New England mind' or 'the Puritan conversion narrative' were habitually presented as distinctive, even formative, contributions to the emergence of various aspects of Americanness.¹⁰ But this impulse transcended the study of theology, morphing into a search for Puritan attitudes to virtually anything and everything. The tendency, inherent in both the intrinsic and extrinsic schools, to essentialise the categories 'Anglican' and 'Puritan' reached perhaps its highest expression, and collapsed under the weight of its own internal contradictions, in Richard Greaves's massive study, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England*. Thus, it was no accident that just as books detailing the inherent differentness of

Anglican from Puritan appeared, so did others denying that any such distinct entities existed.¹¹

The modern history of Puritanism came out of this conjuncture, as dissatisfaction with both the extrinsic/modernising and intrinsic/denominational and tradition-building schools came together. Remarkably, this happened well before the wider revisionist assault was launched upon the historiographies of both Reformation and Civil War England. The breakthrough was made by Patrick Collinson in *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*. The thesis, and the book that emerged from it, were conceived within the Nealean paradigm of a Puritanism that emerged almost immediately out of the quintessentially English and Elizabethan compromise of 1559 to provide the causal motor both for Neale's own narrative of Elizabethan parliamentary and political history and for subsequent accounts of the origins and course of the 'Puritan revolution'. As Neale's student, Collinson was sent off to validate and extend the master's vision into a detailed study of the workings of the Puritan movement, out of parliament, as it were. Neale's model was of Puritanism as an English version of a Calvinist revolutionary movement, continually pushing against, and ultimately foiled by, the abiding structures of the Elizabethan settlement (in other words, by Anglicanism) and the political skills of that quintessential personification of Englishness, Elizabeth Tudor. While at no point organising his work into a critique or even an explicit conversation with Neale's work, Collinson produced something altogether different. He produced, in fact, one of the masterpieces of modern historical scholarship; a narrative account of the Puritan movement that showed that Puritanism's patronage links with central members of the establishment and its ideological links with mainstream Protestantism were so abidingly strong as to call any notion of a radical Puritan opposition, or of Puritanism as a revolutionary ideology, into the most serious question. True, Collinson's story still had its revolutionaries and radicals. His account shifted Thomas Cartwright from centre stage – hence the continuing need to read Scott Pearson's biography of Cartwright, itself a classic example of the quiet virtues of the intrinsic style at its austere and scholarly best¹² – and focused instead on John Field. Collinson described Field as a genuine revolutionary, an English John Knox. And yet in Collinson's account, even Field emerged as a client of Leicester. Moreover, Collinson showed Field and his fellow presbyterians to be a minority even of those classed Puritans, men unable, even at crucial moments, to rally the wider forces of Puritanism into full confrontation with the authorities.

Collinson showed that the story was not one of continuous agitation, a mounting crescendo of increasing activism and radicalism. There were peaks and troughs of Puritan activity and the high points, the points at which Puritanism became a movement indeed, were as much, if not more, a function of the attitudes and policies adopted by elements within the establishment, as of the internal dynamics, the inherent 'radicalism' of Puritan ideology or organisation. If Field was one pivotal figure in the narrative, Archbishop Grindal was another. Grindal's attempt to mitigate and reform the church, and to mollify and accommodate the Puritans, could have worked but for the arbitrary, and more or less accidental, intervention of the queen. Here (in complete contrast to Neale) the villain of the piece was Elizabeth, and also Whitgift, and later his protégé Bancroft.¹³

Collinson's book took the form of a political narrative and he sedulously refused, and has subsequently refused, to define 'Puritanism'. Rather than indulge in elaborate idealist exercises in formal definition, Collinson allowed his account of 'the movement' to produce an inherently political, therefore contingent (and in some ways circular) definition of Puritanism.¹⁴ (This was to take a radically nominalist interpretative tack in an on-going debate about how the term 'Puritan' might best be defined and deployed. Interested in 'Puritans' – aka 'the godly' – from the outset Collinson expressed himself doubtful about the value, perhaps even about the existence, of the *ism* bit of Puritanism; a luxury not perhaps entirely available to contributors to *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*.) The resulting approach was arguably circular because, if 'Puritanism' was a (political) movement, then, when there was no such concerted movement for further reformation, 'Puritanism' would disappear until a (or the) movement emerged again. The result was what Conrad Russell, at his most mischievously deconstructive, used to call the 'Cheshire cat' theory of Puritanism.¹⁵ Collinson's approach meant that the movement from Puritanism to Dissent, indeed even the emergence of coherent differences of assumption, identity and practice separating Puritanism from a (Reformed or Protestant or even an 'Anglican') mainstream were far from inevitable. He was able plausibly to argue that when and if such things happened, they happened after the period he studied and for politically contingent reasons.

Such conclusions undermined many of the foundational assumptions not only of the intrinsic but also of the extrinsic school of interpretation. *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* came out in 1967, but the thesis on which it was based was finished ten years earlier.¹⁶

This is quite remarkable because the analysis contained in those texts foreshadowed many of the central features of what was to emerge, nearly twenty years later in the 1970s, as revisionism. In fact, in its subtle, unpolemical engagement with existing narratives, its unwillingness merely to invert conventional wisdom and declare victory, its refusal to replace an account based on bi-polar Anglican/Puritan conflict with one based on consensus, Collinson's book anticipated not so much revisionism as post-revisionism.

Revisionism, however, would have its day. Puritanism as radical opposition, as the most determined traveller down 'the high road to civil war', and then as the motive force for the 'Puritan revolution', was necessarily at the top of the revisionists' hit list, and revisionist scholars would have two goes at the subject. Here the initial (and crucial) move was made by Nicholas Tyacke, who argued that when, in the Jacobean period, public agitation for further reformation dwindled almost to nothing, Puritanism too, in effect, declined, even disappeared, leaving behind a 'Calvinist consensus'.¹⁷ By this phrase Tyacke was seeking to encapsulate the ties of thought and feeling that linked even the more radical Puritans with central elements in the establishment. Tyacke organised his account of what he termed 'the ameliorating bond' that united the various strands of English Protestantism behind the evangelical and anti-popish mission of the national church on the doctrine of predestination. He did so because, for many hot Protestants, the assumption that the English church was a part of the international Reformed community – its status as a true church confirmed by its profession of true doctrine – came under threat in the later 1620s and 1630s because of the rise of Arminianism; that is to say, the emergence of a style of churchmanship with an anti-Calvinist, or Arminian theology of grace at or near its centre. He argued that the rise of Arminianism thus served to create, or rather to recreate, a radical Puritan movement where, for the greater part of the early Stuart period, except on the separatist and sectarian fringes, there had been none before.¹⁸

Tyacke's position represented in many ways a development of William Lamont's earlier re-evaluation of William Prynne. Once seen as the classic Puritan radical or parliamentarian-Puritan extremist, Lamont presented Prynne as an essentially conservative defender of Calvinist orthodoxy, the royal supremacy and the common law against Laudian churchmanship and Caroline absolutism.¹⁹ Tyacke's case was also entirely congruent with Collinson's approach in *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*. That the early 1970s was the right historiographical, one might say ideological, moment to assault the integrity and

coherence of Puritanism was shown by the appearance, at precisely the same time, of other (differently constituted, independently generated, and, it must be said, much less intellectually distinguished and successful) attempts to do much the same thing.²⁰

Tyacke's thesis of 1968 and article of 1973 developed these diffuse elements into a cogently argued explanation of the religious origins of the English Civil War, an explanation that, in classic revisionist mode, inverted the received account by displacing an oppositional, even revolutionary, Puritanism with an insurgent, innovatory and polarising Arminianism. It was as the wave of revisionist reinterpretation crested in the late 1970s and early 1980s that Collinson re-entered the fray, with his *The Religion of Protestants*. This was a subtly polemical book, in which the argument of each chapter (and indeed of the whole) took the form of a dialogue with or critique of a previous interpretation, very frequently of Puritanism. Lamont's notion of godly rule and of an inherent clash between *iure divino* episcopacy and the royal supremacy; Rosemary O'Day's account of the mounting tensions between an increasingly professionalised (and often 'Puritan') clericalism and the influence of the laity; Walzer's notion of Puritanism as the first revolutionary ideology; Peter Clark's, or indeed Christopher Hill's and later Keith Wrightson's, identification of Puritanism with the ideology of the middling sort and the notion of 'social control', and their concomitant assertion of consistently adversarial relations between 'Puritanism' and 'popular culture', all came under fire.²¹ Collinson emphasised throughout the compatibility of the hotter sort of Protestantism with the hierarchical structures of English monarchical society. Absent a Jacobean Puritan movement, in the central years of James's reign, it was as though the church of Grindal had returned in triumph. Even the prophesyings came back as 'lectures by combination'. Collinson found little or none of the tension between 'Puritan lectureships' and the parochial structures of the national church that Paul Seaver had previously identified in his account of such lectures as an aspect of 'the politics of religious dissent'.²²

According to Collinson, insofar as Puritanism was anything other than a political movement for the further reformation of the church, it became a form of 'voluntary', even of 'popular', religion, a series of social and pietistic practices and networks, the appeal of which was not restricted to any one social group or 'class', and which were designed to augment, rather than to transform, and certainly not to subvert, the evangelical purposes, administrative structures and pietistic practices of the national church. Here was a cultural or social, rather than a political,

definition of Puritanism; one which tended to privilege Puritanism's integrative and gradualist tendencies over its polarising and radicalising potentials.²³ On this account, schism or separation was not a result of the Puritan impulse but rather a sign of its failure.²⁴ Collinson also stopped his narrative short, not in 1637, or 1640 or even 1642, but rather in 1625. On this view, the relative quiescence of the early Stuart period was the result of the failure or suppression of the 'Elizabethan Puritan movement', not a prelude or seed bed for 'the Puritan revolution'. Such an emphasis put on hold any attempt to seek the origins of the later radical Puritanism of the 1640s in the preceding period.

For Collinson, insofar as 'Puritan' did emerge as a distinctive and divisive category during this period it did so because of the activities of certain polemicists and satirists who, to make certain polemical points, to achieve influence, or to sell books and attract audiences, produced a variety of Antipuritan stereotypes; stereotypes that bore little or no relation to 'reality', something, on this view, largely closed to contemporaries but open to the objective gaze of the historian.²⁵ At this point, we might see a sort of 1950s positivism meeting a version of post-modern constructivism to rather unfortunate effect.²⁶ It is also true that the most distinguished and concerted attempt to reconstruct from within the religious style and concerns of an activist lay Puritan, Paul Seaver's account of Nehemiah Wallington, did not entirely support these conclusions. But, as Seaver was only too happy to concede, Wallington was not exactly 'typical'.²⁷

There developed, out of Collinson and Tyacke's account, and in reaction against the high revisionism of Conrad Russell, an alternative, 'post-revisionist' view of the matter, which did not equate Puritanism with the Puritan movement, but rather accepted that, as Elizabeth's reign progressed and further reformation did not happen, groups of individuals emerged whose style of piety, vision of the nature of the godly community and of that community's relations with both the national church and the wider social order, increasingly marked them off from their contemporaries as 'Puritans'. In this view, not all these people were formally nonconformist. On the contrary, some of them developed casuistical means to justify their acceptance or circumvention of 'conformity' as elements within the establishment intermittently tried to define and enforce it.

These people could, it was claimed, be described as 'moderate Puritans'. They called themselves 'the brethren', 'the godly' and 'true professors' – in their own eyes they were agents of further reformation, shock-troops in the struggle against the popish Antichrist and hence

bulwarks of order and obedience. To their enemies, however, they were alternately ludicrous and sinister; busybodies and subversives, 'Puritans' and 'busy controllers'. As Collinson had put it, in a justly famous phrase, Puritanism was always just one side of a tense relationship.²⁸

Post-revisionists found the relationship of 'moderate Puritans' both to 'the Puritan movement' and to the authorities – and hence to the causes of order, obedience and orthodoxy – to be complex and contradictory. On the one hand, Puritanism could be seen as a product of tensions between some of the central tenets of Reformed orthodoxy and the structures and operating assumptions of the national church. On the other, emergent styles of Puritan piety and subjectivity were themselves a product of the appropriation and application of the same Reformed orthodoxy to which even the most virulently conformist elements in the Church of England also subscribed. Thus conceived, Puritanism had within it integrative and ameliorative, as well as polarising and fissiparous, impulses. Which set of impulses won out at any given moment depended, as Collinson has always argued (both in 1967 and in 2006), upon attendant political circumstances.²⁹

The aim here was fully to exploit the interpretative opportunities offered by the demise of the Anglican/Puritan binary exploded by Collinson and Tyacke; not by replacing one – Anglican/Puritan, Calvinist/Arminian, reformist/conformist – binary opposition with another but rather by creating a whole range of categories suitable for the analysis of different issues, situations and periods. The result was a small outbreak of neologism, the invention of a range of (often deliberately paradoxical, even oxymoronic) terms to describe different sorts of Puritans (moderates, radicals) and conformists (Calvinist conformists, avant-garde conformists, Arminians, Laudians). This was done in full recognition that the positions being thus identified were themselves often unstable ideological syntheses, political coalitions and expedients, called into being by particular circumstances and liable to fall apart, and re-form into other, altogether different patterns, when the situation changed.³⁰

But, thus conceived, for post-revisionists Puritanism remained one of the more stable and long-lived of the emergent religious identities in this period. Indeed, the claim here was that Puritanism became more rather than less distinctive as, from the early 1570s, Antipuritan, overtly 'conformist', theories of church government and styles of polemic emerged. The effect was compounded from the 1590s (rather than the 1620s) when distinctively Antipuritan and anti-Calvinist styles of piety and doctrine started to emerge.³¹

Of course, the seventeenth century did not see the disappearance of Puritanism within a refurbished Grindalian consensus, and in explaining that fact Collinson had recourse to two claims entirely characteristic of high revisionism: the first, that the crucial changes happened 'not in my period', and the second, that they were the fault of Archbishop Laud. For all their debunking of Puritanism, the revisionists did anything but reduce the role of 'religion' in explaining the causes and course of the political conflicts that culminated in the English Civil War. On the contrary, for them, religious identity, passion and controversy became the explanation of choice for conflicts rendered otherwise inexplicable by their accounts of the largely consensual political thought and culture of the period.³²

This emphasis on religion was not merely a function of the revisionists' assault on the received 'whig' political narrative, but also a part of their broader critique of the 'extrinsic' school of Puritan studies, which involved explanations of Puritanism that were not solely, or in some cases even mainly, 'religious'. The extrinsic school found 'Puritanism', as well as its evil twin 'Anglicanism', and indeed 'religion' more broadly conceived, to be a function of other wider social, cultural, political or economic changes and forces. For many revisionists (and indeed not only for revisionists) this smelt of 'reductionism' and anachronism; the tendency to reduce contemporary (religious) languages, experiences and categories into other (secular) terms, terms more susceptible to modern modes of sociological analysis. In the writings of the extrinsic school, both high politics and 'religion' tended to become epi-phenomena, responses to, indeed effects of, other, deeper secular (social and economic) forces and interests. These historians were also nearly all wedded to various modernisation stories and in telling them, they more or less accepted the established 'whig' religio-political master narrative. Revisionists were committed to undoing both that narrative and the theories of modernisation and modes of social explanation that were being used by the extrinsic school to instantiate and explain it. Accordingly, the revisionists asserted the relative, indeed in practice the more or less absolute, autonomy both of a (mostly high and parliamentary) 'politics' and of 'religion'.³³

Notoriously, revisionists were often (understandably but unfairly) accused of antiquarianism, as well as of a Namierite obsession with the pursuit of immediate ends and interests – of taking the mind, the 'ideology', out of politics.³⁴ Here 'religion' came to the revisionists' rescue. If religion constituted an autonomous, irreducible element in human experience, then the mere presence of religious belief and

passion, of confessional division and theological or ecclesiological argument, became, in themselves, sufficient – indeed, within the stiflingly consensual revisionist paradigm of the politics of the period, much needed – explanations for conflict.³⁵

This move had many beneficial effects for the field. It put religious ideas – both formal theology and its application to the affective and social lives of contemporaries and to the ritual and liturgical practices of the visible church – at the centre of scholarly attention. Disciplinary boundaries between divinity and history, indeed between church history, as it had traditionally been practised, and the more general political and cultural, social and institutional, histories of early modern England, broke down. Theological treatises and works of polemic were both taken seriously on their own terms and contextualised and interpreted as pieces of historical evidence like any other.³⁶ Such developments might be seen as a little, local outbreak of the linguistic and cultural turns of the later 1970s and 1980s.³⁷

Moreover, the rise of the Arminianism thesis called into question not only essentialised notions of Puritanism, but also parallel, and equally essentialised and mono-vocal, notions of ‘Anglicanism’, defined as a single, unitary, calmingly hierarchical and moderate ideology exuded into the body politic by the national church, through its ritual practices and professions of faith. Much of this was pure gain.

But in asserting the relative autonomy of the religious, and thus separating off ‘religion’ from both ‘society’ and ‘politics’ – for, on this account, while religion shaped politics and indeed, on some views, helped to constitute ‘the social’, neither politics nor society shaped religion – again such arguments were both anachronistic and ‘reductionist’; the way was opened for a reversion to the intrinsic mode of analysis and, as it turned out, for the return of the confessional and denominational concerns that went with it.

On Tyacke’s account, a central feature of Arminian innovation had been the redefinition of Puritanism as Calvinism. This was to put at the very centre of accounts of the origins of the Civil War, ‘contemporary’ (that is to say both seventeenth- and twentieth-century) disputes about the nature, the theological and affective identity, of the Church of England and to identify different constructions of ‘Puritanism’ as central sites upon which such debates about the identity of the national church could be and had been conducted and resolved. Here was Puritanism re-entering the discourse not as the self-defining first mover in the drama of ‘the Puritan revolution’, but rather as Arminianism’s (indeed, on some views of the matter, as ‘Anglicanism’s’) defining other. The result has

been a recent historiography in which rival versions of the Church of England have been canvassed in and through rival versions of Puritanism. What is at stake here is a rather unfortunate reversion to both the denominational tendencies inherent in the intrinsic mode and to a situation in which many of the people writing about 'Puritans' are not in fact interested in them at all, except insofar as that subject allows them to talk about something else.

This tendency has been compounded by a distinctly anti-Collinsonian and anti-Tyackean reaction within revisionism itself. This represents the revisionists' second go at Puritanism. Tyacke's, and indeed Russell's, and – certainly in *The Religion of Protestants* – Collinson's accounts had all hinged on a contrast between James I and Charles I and on the rise of an aggressive and innovatory Arminianism. In some hands, this led to the 'blame' for the conflicts (both religious and then political) that paved the way to civil war being laid on Charles and Laud. (In Collinson's remarkable phrase Laud was 'the greatest calamity' ever to be visited upon the Church of England.)³⁸ For revisionists, whose prime concern was the period after 1630, and who were accordingly committed to seeing the world as Charles and Laud, rather than as their enemies (and as a judgemental, hindsight wielding posterity) saw it, all this was too much. Noting that Charles and Laud did not see themselves as innovators or revolutionaries, but as proponents of order, orthodoxy and obedience, defenders of Elizabethan tradition and the monarchical way against a populist and Puritan threat, historians like Kevin Sharpe, and more recently Mark Kishlansky, decided to take them at their word.³⁹ This move directly parallels Collinson's similarly sympathetic acceptance of the self-understanding of the godly as 'on their own terms' about as subversive as the homily of obedience.⁴⁰

Here were Laud *et al.* as Whitgift and Bancroft on speed, and Charles as a more determined and effective version of Queen Elizabeth. This, of course, had been Charles I's and Christopher Hill's view of the matter. Hill's analysis of the nature of Puritanism as a threat to the structure of a parochial, episcopal and indeed monarchical church had shifted seamlessly from the anti-presbyterian polemics of the 1590s to the Antipuritan diatribes of the 1630s. For Hill (as for Kevin Sharpe), Bancroft, Laud, Whitgift and Heylin all spoke with one voice on the subject of Puritanism and they were all right, all of the time.⁴¹ For Collinson, of course, they were wrong(ish), for large chunks even of Elizabeth's reign and for most, if not all, of James's, which explains why the conformist strand in English Protestant thought has always been given a relatively minor role in Collinson's work. At stake in these

(partial) exclusions and silences is, of course, the validation of a particular (Grindalian) version of the mainstream, in effect of a particular version of Anglicanism. Thus could what started out as a deconstructive assault on various denominational accounts of Puritanism later become a (subtly) denominational intervention in controversies over the identity of Anglicanism.

All this left the resulting new model revisionism with the task of accounting for the extreme reaction against Arminianism or Laudianism of at least some contemporaries. An explanation was found in a refurbished account of Puritanism, indeed, in Kevin Sharpe's case, of Calvinism, not only as a deviant 'other', but as a proto-revolutionary ideology.⁴² By this point, we have come full circle; the cutting edge of revisionism having reverted to the central claims and tropes of 'whiggery' in the space of twenty or so years.

And if we look at the recent literature we can see various versions of Puritanism being constructed and deployed as the defining other of various (rival) versions of the 'Anglican' 'mainstream'. Here the work of Peter White, Judith Maltby and, most recently, of Charles Prior, comes most obviously to mind. Both White and Prior use a version of Puritan radicalism: in White's case, identified by a strident Calvinism and hysterical anti-popery, in Prior's, by presbyterian and proto-independent theories of church government and radical nonconformity – in Prior's locution 'reformists' – to construct a coherent, consensual Anglicanism, a capacious spectrum of opinions or broad church, the members of which were united by their common opposition to Puritanism thus defined – a body of thought Prior dubs 'conformist'. While White and Prior operate within the old Anglican/Puritan binary to assert the essential unity and moderation of the Anglican (or conformist) 'mainstream' (and hence to deny the existence or novelty of Arminianism or Laudianism), Maltby accepts the singularity and divisiveness of Laudianism. She then invokes Laudianism and a version of Puritanism centred on the most extreme and aggressive nonconformity and separatism – for Maltby, as for Prior, there can be no 'moderate Puritans' – as the two extremes which define her via media of choice, a populist 'prayer book Protestantism' created by the interaction between the moderate, commonsensical religiosity of 'the people' and religious values she takes to be inherent in the Book of Common Prayer.⁴³

Unlike Maltby, Alex Walsham assimilates Puritanism to an evangelical Protestant mainstream and pushes Laudianism to the periphery, suggesting, with Christopher Haigh, that popular support for the Laudian project may well have come not from anywhere within 'the

religion of Protestants' but rather entirely from without – from 'church papists'. Haigh reverses these claims. Instead of, with Walsham, assimilating Puritanism to Protestantism, he assimilates Protestantism to Puritanism, the more easily to marginalise both from his version of a popular conservative, indeed in effect a 'catholic', mainstream; a mainstream that he speculates might well have provided the popular roots for the churchmanship of Laud and his allies after 1603. On this logic Laudianism becomes the embodiment of the 'catholic continuity of the English reformation',⁴⁴ the religion of the people developed to the highest pitch of coherence, self-consciousness and (both Antipuritan and anti-Calvinist) polemical aggression. Puritanism, on the other hand, is the religion of university-trained clerical intellectuals and lay busybodies, persons always already at odds with 'the people'. The result, of course, is three very different versions of a populist Anglican mainstream, all justified by different constructions of the 'Puritan' other and of that most elusive and protean of beasts, the religion of the people.⁴⁵

The return of Anglicanism (both thing and occasionally name) to the centre of the discourse has thus not been good for the study of Puritanism, which, in much recent work, has been stuffed back inside one version or another of the old Anglican/Puritan binary and then pushed from pillar to post as the defining (inherently peripheral, oppositional, 'unpopular') other of a variety of versions of the 'mainstream'. Happily, however, neither Anglican recidivism nor hyper-revisionism have entirely dominated recent writing on the subject.

In the absence both of a continuous narrative spine, like that provided by the classis movement, and, after revisionism at least, of an assumed 'high road to civil war', it had become increasingly difficult to write continuous histories of early Stuart Puritanism. The networks and activities of the godly showed up in numerous local studies, but the diffuse nature of the evidence, and the use of the county as the basic unit of analysis for much local research, tended to make any sort of coherent national story hard to tell.⁴⁶ Accordingly, tracing the social and political networks of the godly played a major part in early critiques of localism. For while godly magistrates and clergy were indeed very prominent in the government of the localities and the protection of local interests at the centre, they could also be seen as self-consciously operating as part of wider networks of connection and ideological affinity, seeing themselves as actors on a genuinely national, indeed on an international, stage.⁴⁷

Thus, Puritanism featured centrally in discussions of the 'ecology of allegiance' in the English Civil Wars. Here an essentially Hillian association of Puritan religion with certain modes of production and

patterns of social relations was combined with an Everittian concern, not so much with the county, as with the 'pay', the distinctive economic or farming region, as the basic unit of analysis. This was used to undercut an earlier (and equally Everittian) account of local politics and society as centred entirely upon the gentry and the county. Such an approach played a role in the early work of Ann Hughes and reached its apogee in David Underdown's *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*.⁴⁸

Others took a more minimalist, almost prosopographical, approach. In a number of important essays Nicholas Tyacke has started to sketch the continuous history of Puritanism through the early Stuart period. Central to Tyacke's research method has been a microscopic reconstruction of the social networks of the London godly.⁴⁹ Working from the provinces back in, and using not the county but the gentry family as her basic unit of study, Jacqui Eales connected Puritan activity on the Welsh borders to the broader social and political networks of both Sir Robert and Brilliana Harley.⁵⁰ Using the notion of sociability as his organising concept, Tom Webster reconstructed the networks of the clergy, primarily in Essex, but also (drawing on the unpublished work of John Fielding) in the diocese of Peterborough, to delineate what he saw as the workings of a Caroline Puritan movement.⁵¹ Webster's research has been complemented by that of Frank Bremer on the transatlantic connections of the Puritan clergy.⁵² While Webster and Bremer focused (somewhat problematically) on the clergy, others have worked on the laity and lay/clerical relations. The meticulous local research of John Fielding and Ann Hughes has allowed them to use the diaries of Robert Woodford and Thomas Dugard, two largely obscure men of the Midlands – the first an attorney, the second a schoolmaster and later a minister – to reveal the intricate connections that, amongst the godly at least, bound the local to the national and vice versa.⁵³ Such research helps to lend substance to Russell's claim to see in the national networks of the godly the origins of the parliamentary party of 1642.⁵⁴

Others have sought to reconstruct the ways in which doctrinal innovation and dispute were both generated within and contained by the internal workings of the godly community. David Como's brilliant reconstruction of what he terms the first antinomian crisis – a crisis that occurred not in New England but in London – shows how internal tensions amongst the godly – tensions between the laity and the clergy, between different aspects of Reformed orthodoxy, between the tenets and texts that constituted that orthodoxy and other more heterodox texts and ideas, between the subjective religious experience of the laity, the demands of Reformed orthodoxy and the practical divinity being pumped

out through pulpit and press by the clergy – could generate doctrinal innovation and dispute.⁵⁵ Again, Como's research in England has been amplified in an Atlantic context by Michael Winship's magisterial reinterpretation of the disputes over free grace in Massachusetts.⁵⁶ Tracing the course of a series of doctrinal spats and controversies, all of them internal to Puritanism, it has been possible greatly to expand the range of opinions and types of text we can observe circulating within the godly community. The parties to debate conducted within that community can be seen to have included persons tinged with Familism and Anabaptism; various sorts of separatist and sectary; certain would-be prophets and inspired exegetes, as well as the usual run of presbyterians, proto-independents and radical, as well as moderate, nonconformists and Puritans. Of course, the internal workings of the godly community were not always or necessarily orthogonal to the workings of ecclesiastical authority and discipline. Under the right circumstances, the one could collaborate with and reinforce the other. But under different circumstances, particularly when ecclesiastical power lay in the hands of determined Antipuritans and/or anti-Calvinists, such disputes could spin out of control, spilling from within the networks and mechanisms of dispute resolution, which the godly used to keep their disputes in-house, into the clear light of open doctrinal dispute and (sometimes even) of printed polemic. (Thus, the knock-on effects of the 'rise of Arminianism' play a central role in both Webster and Como's work.) This is to relate the production of the most radical forms of Puritan heterodoxy and Dissent to doctrines and practices central to moderate Puritanism and to the day-to-day functioning of the godly community.⁵⁷ On this account, as Nicholas McDowell has also argued, the learned and austere, discipline- and orthodoxy-centred Puritanism of Hill's *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* was not distinct, in either its intellectual, affective or social bases, from the more radical, heterodox strain delineated in *The World Turned Upside Down*. On the contrary, each produced and conditioned the other, and the relations between the two are best conceived as dialogic and dialectical. It is possible now to give concrete cultural, social and political form to the theological contacts between mainstream Puritanism and the sort of radical heterodoxy that culminated in Quakerism to which Geoffrey Nuttall adverted in 1946.⁵⁸

For all these studies speak to the relationship between the Puritanism of the 1620s and 1630s and that of the 1640s. This was a problematic infinitely deferred by the revisionist obsession with the avoidance of whiggish teleology and anachronism, and the concomitant

habit of cutting off the narrative at, say, 1625, 1640 or 1642. After the initial polemical point had been made, such self-denying ordinances tended to become themselves obstacles to understanding. Webster connects the ecclesiological disputes of the 1640s with the developments and concerns of the 1630s. A sense of the internal dynamics of the 'London Puritan underground' or 'Puritan public sphere' before 1640 makes many of the developments of the 1640s far more readily explicable. Ann Hughes's brilliant account of the world of Thomas Edwards, of the rapid transition into print and into the vituperative politics of Puritan Antipuritanism and of the public sphere, of assertions made, challenges thrown down and disputes conducted in person, in the pulpit and in manuscript, resonates wonderfully with the world revealed by Como and others, operating, as it were, *sotto voce* and in private, amongst the godly, before the political crisis of the early 1640s hit.⁵⁹ That presses associated with Richard Overton printed, along with propaganda for the Scots, immediately contemporary heterodox texts, a Marprelate tract and the long-dead prophet and exegete T.L.'s *De Fide* shows the sort of connections operating here, not only between the politics of radical parliamentarianism and those of a radical, heterodox and actually or potentially sectarian Puritanism, but also between the Puritanisms of the pre- and post-Civil War periods.⁶⁰

The central role of an Antipuritanism, increasingly centred on the sectarian threat, in garnering support for the king, at both the popular and elite levels, similarly shows how royalism itself was constituted by Puritanism, or, perhaps better yet, how royalism was able to constitute itself by harking on the (real enough) links between both radical and moderate, orthodox and heterodox Puritanism and between Puritanism in all its guises and the emergent parliamentary cause.⁶¹

All this is not simply to revert to 'the Puritan revolution' or even to the English Civil War as 'a war of religion', but rather to use Puritanism (both name and thing, movement and polemically inflected construct, ascribed and internalised identity) to show just how, through the processes of political manoeuvre and public debate and polemic, 'religion' and 'politics' continually constructed and reconstructed one another throughout the post-Reformation and Civil War periods. On this basis there can be no doubting the continuing salience, the analytic relevance and bite, of the notion of Puritanism. Clearly, despite the efforts of myriad historians to consign Puritanism, both name and thing, to the trash-can of exploded or abandoned concepts, to use it as an excuse to talk about something else, or, indeed, to employ it for their own confessional or sectarian purposes as the defining other of an always

already unconsummated 'Anglican' project, the historiography of Puritanism has not only had an immensely distinguished past but also has a very bright future.

Notes

1. R. Bancroft, *Dangerous Positions* (London, 1593).
2. P. Heylin, *Aerius Redivivus: or a History of the Presbyterians* (Oxford, 1670); Heylin, *Cyprianus Anglicus* (London, 1668); J. Hackett, *Scrinia Reserata* (London, 1693); S. Clarke, *A General Martyrology* (London, 1650, reissued in 1677); *A Martyrology containing a Collection of all the Persecutions which have befallen the Church of England* (London, 1652); *The Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines* (London, 1660); *A Collection of the Lives of Ten Eminent Divines* (London, 1662); *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines* (London, 1677); *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons of this Later Age* (London, 1683).
3. S. R. Gardiner, *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War*, 10 vols. (London, 1883). N. Tyacke, 'An unnoticed work by Samuel Rawson Gardiner', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 47, (1974), 244–5.
4. J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1559–1581* (London, 1953) and Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1584–1603* (London, 1957); W. Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955) and Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism: Or the Way to the New Jerusalem as set forth in Pulpit and Press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton* (New York, 1957).
5. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1926); K. V. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971); C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1966); Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1965); R. K. Merton, 'Science, technology and society in seventeenth-century England', *Osiris*, 4 (1938), 360–632; M. Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge, MA, 1966); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (London, 1977); C. John Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood and Puritanism* (Athens, GA, 1992).
6. K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (New York, 1979).
7. C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972).
8. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979); Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh, 1982).
9. G. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946).
10. P. Miller, *The New England Mind* (Cambridge, MA, 1953); N. Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, 1966); P. Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge, 1983); S. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI, 1978); A. Delbanco, *The Puritan*

- Ordeal* (Cambridge, MA, 1989); J. Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).
11. R. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, 1981); D. Little, *Religion, Order and Law* (Oxford, 1970); J.F. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their Opposition* (London, 1964); Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Early Stuart England* (New Haven, 1976); C.H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation* (Princeton, NJ, 1961).
 12. A.F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1925).
 13. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967); also see the essays collected in his *Godly People* (London, 1983).
 14. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 13.
 15. See C. Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 25–32, esp. p. 28.
 16. P. Collinson, 'The Puritan Classical Movement' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1957).
 17. Here it should be pointed out that that catchphrase, 'Calvinist consensus', was not coined by Tyacke himself, but by others seeking to encapsulate and comment upon his position.
 18. Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution', in C. Russell, ed., *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973).
 19. W. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne* (London, 1963). The revisionist project of Conrad Russell had its origins in a similar engagement with the career of that other quintessential parliamentary-Puritan, John Pym. See his 'The parliamentary career of John Pym, 1621–9', in P. Clark, N. Tyacke and A.G.R. Smith, eds., *The English Commonwealth* (Leicester, 1979).
 20. M. Finlayson, *Puritanism and the English Revolution* (Toronto, 1983); P. Christianson, 'Reformers and the Church of England under Elizabeth I and the early Stuarts', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), 463–82.
 21. P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford, 1982); W. Lamont, *Godly Rule* (London, 1969); Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints*; R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession* (Leicester, 1979); Peter Clark, 'The ale house and the alternative society', in D. Pennington and K. Thomas, eds., *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1982).
 22. P. Collinson, 'Lectures by combination', in his *Godly People*; P. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent* (Stanford, CA, 1970).
 23. P. Collinson, 'The English conventicle', first published in 1986 and now reprinted in his *From Cranmer to Sanicroft* (London, 2006); his *The Religion of Protestants*, chs. 5 and 6; and his 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996).
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27. P. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, CA, 1985).
28. P. Collinson, 'A comment: concerning the name Puritan', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), 483–8.
29. P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982); *Anglicans and Puritans! Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988); P. Lake and M. Dowling, eds., *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 1987); P. Lake, 'Defining Puritanism – again?', in F. Bremer, ed., *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a 17th-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, MA, 1993); Seaver, *Wallington's World*; J. Eales, 'Sir Robert Harley, K. B. (1579–1656) and the "character of a Puritan"', *British Library Journal*, 15 (1989), 134–57.
30. P. Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge and avant-garde conformity at the court of James I', in L. L. Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991); Lake, 'Serving God and the times: the Calvinist conformity of Robert Sanderson', *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (1988), 81–116; Lake, 'The Laudian style', in K. Fincham, ed., *The Early Stuart Church* (Basingstoke, 1993). Much the best account of such an entity as an unstable synthesis or coalition is Anthony Milton's analysis of Laudianism in T. Cogswell, R. Cust and P. Lake, eds., *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain* (Cambridge, 2002).
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32. J. S. Morrill, 'The religious context of the English Civil War' and more generally Part I of his *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993); C. Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990).
33. The locus classicus here is Russell, *Causes of the English Civil War*, p. x. For a classic statement of this sort of case, albeit for a later period, see J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1683–1832* (Cambridge, 1985).
34. P. Lake, 'Retrospective', in J. Merritt, ed., *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth* (Cambridge, 1996); T. Cogswell, R. Cust and P. Lake, 'Revisionism and its legacies', in Cogswell, Cust and Lake, eds., *Politics, Religion and Popularity*.
35. Russell, *Causes of the English Civil War*; J. S. Morrill, 'The religious context'.

36. N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987); Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*; A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 1995); P. Lake, 'Calvinism and the English church, c. 1570–1635', *Past and Present*, 114 (1987), 32–76.
37. More parochially, they might also be seen, again, as the rest of the field catching up, twenty or thirty years later, with moves first made by Collinson in the 1950s and 1960s.
38. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution' and his later *Anti-Calvinists*; Russell, *Causes*; Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p. 90.
39. K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (London, 1992); M. Kishlansky, 'Charles I: a case of mistaken identity', *Past and Present*, 189 (2005), 41–80.
40. Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p. 177. Taken seriously, and on their own terms, the categories and claims, the self-images and polemical bugbears, of contemporaries have a crucial role to play in any properly relativist, non-reductionist account of the beliefs and activities of those we study. But this sort of selective credulity in the face of one set of contemporary claims, as opposed to others, merely chooses sides in contemporary disputes, and thus imports the structures of those disputes into the historian's own analysis.
41. C. Hill, 'From Grindal to Laud', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, vol. II, *Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1986).
42. K. Sharpe, 'A commonwealth of meanings', reprinted in his *Remapping Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000).
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